



# Years of Impact

# oaktree

## Cambodia

2008 - 2015

- **Beacon Schools Initiative**, aiming to bring private school standards to state schools, in partnership with Kampuchea Action to Promote Education (KAPE): 3 schools, 1739 students, including 840 girls. Developed scholarship program for teachers to pursue further qualifications part-time.

2016 - 2019

- Witnessing the success of the Beacon Schools Initiative program, the Cambodian Ministry of Education introduced a similar program called **the New Generation schools (NGs)**. The Ministry of Education has written a NGs policy, based on Oaktree & KAPE'S model, which was signed in September 2016. This has since transformed the school curriculum across Cambodia.

2020 - 2021

- **Kampuchean Young Leaders Action (KYLA)** established in partnership with **KAPE**. KYLA and highschool volunteers distributed COVID-response at-home packages: 6 schools, 90 students.

## Papua New Guinea

2008 - 2011

- **Trained 9 young teachers** through an accredited college in Enga Province in partnership with the Baptist Union.
- **Reopened a school in Yangis**, a remote community in the highlands of PNG.

2012 - 2015

- **Men and Women's Vocational Training Project**, aimed to tackle high crime-rates by addressing gender inequality, youth unemployment, low literacy rates and lack of vocation training: 130 men graduated and found employment, 30 women enrolled in Haus Ruth women's program to gain an education and financial independence.

## South Africa

2003 - 2011 (ZwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga Province)

- **Generation of Leaders HIV peer education scheme**: 13 schools, 6,500 students.
- **HIV/Aids Peer Education Project**: implemented Scholarships for life skills and leadership education: supported 1,400 students.
- **Sethani Ogaganeni Resource Centre**: implemented the Gold Program in 19 schools.
- **World Changers Academy**: library services and vocational training for young people.

## Timor-Leste

2003 - 2007

- **Likisa District**: built 7 schools, trained teachers and provided hundreds of scholarships in partnership with The Stromme Foundation

2008 - 2011

- **Youth Entrepreneurship**: upskilled 200 young people in Timor-Leste in starting their own business.

2012 - 2015

- **Youth Empowerment Peace Building Project** in partnership with Ba Futuru, to build youth capacity to prevent, manage and resolve violent situations peacefully. 16 training sessions, 492 participants trained.

2021 - 2021

- **Foin-Sae Lidera Hamutuk (FoLiHa) Project** in partnership with Ba Futuru, to build leadership, community action, advocacy and conflict resolution skills among young people: 50 Youth Changemakers upskilled.

## Australia

2003 - 2007

- **ZeroSeven Roadtrip education campaign** to increase Australian foreign aid expenditure: 700 youth ambassadors, 5 cities. Successfully influenced the incoming Rudd administration to raise foreign aid to 0.5% of GNI at the Roadtrip finale event in Sydney.

2008 - 2011

- **Act to End Poverty**, a petition calling on the Australian government to reaffirm its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals: 47,000 signatures collected. Ultimately resulted in the Act being passed through both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## International

2016-2019

- International Youth Exchange: 5 partners, 12 participants, 2 exchange trips, 2 hostings, 2 IYE network collaborations.
- Representatives from Oaktree, The Voice Inc., YACA, and an alumni from the Australia-Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue presented a panel with the Lowy Institute on Engaging Young Australians and Papua New Guineans in the Political Process'.
- Connected Ba Futuru with KAPE.

2021-2022

- Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund provided short-term, flexible grants to youth-led grassroots organisations in Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Tonga. 5 partners, tackling climate change, gender inequality, lack of education and technology, and youth unemployment.

# Impact Timeline



“With Oaktree, the bang for buck is very high. Oaktree is raising the next generation of social entrepreneurs and changemakers, who will go on to do unimaginably great things.”

- Nick Allardice

“We learned so many things... but most of all what we learned was how to lead, how to influence, and how to be a courageous person.”

- Youth Participant, FoLiHa (Youth Empowerment and Peacebuilding Project in Timor-Leste), 2019-22

“Oaktree holds a significant position in the history of youth engagement in Australia. It can be easy to underestimate this now that there are a bunch of other opportunities for young people. But in a modern Australian context, we ended up pioneering a model of what it could look like for young people to engage in driving change.”

- Nic Mackay

“Oaktree teaches young people an important lesson: that you don’t have to wait. As young people we’re often told that we don’t have a right to contribute until we have “experience”. Oaktree reminds us that our lived experiences are just as valid, if not more so, when it comes to the issues and solutions that impact us most as young people. Young voices are needed where decisions are being made - they bring a unique perspective to our board rooms, government departments, university faculties and even our Parliaments...”

- Kareem El-Ansary

“For all of the good that oaktree has done internationally, in lots of ways our best achievement has been the empowerment of the young people who come through as volunteers.”

- Lloyd Alderman

# 20 Years of Impact

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# Introduction

## Hello, we're Oaktree.

Like our namesake tree, we had humble beginnings.

In 2003, we had only a small team of passionate volunteers. We met in living rooms, cafes and school classrooms with one goal in mind: end extreme poverty. Since then, we have grown. We have grown in size, but we have also grown to realise that poverty is a mere symptom of greater injustices: from economic inequality to the climate crisis.

We exist to shift resources and build the capabilities of young people to solve these injustices. We believe that the key to long-term sustainable development lies in young people having the resources, backing and belief to turn their ideas into a reality.

We're completely run by youth, for youth. As such, we have a whole generation of volunteer and staff alumni who form the roots of our organisation.

We are currently entering our twentieth year, which is a pretty big milestone for us. On this special anniversary, we want to share some highlights from our journey so far, but in true Oaktree-fashion we thought we'd do things a bit differently.

Oaktree's impact has been two-fold. First and foremost, we have impacted thousands of young people overseas, from South Africa to Timor-Leste, and equipped them with the tools to build a better life for themselves and their communities. But our impact doesn't stop there. We have also created a space for hundreds of young Australians to learn about and influence international development.

We're completely run by youth, for youth. As such, we have a whole generation of volunteer and staff alumni who form the roots of our organisation.

By volunteering or working with us, these young Aussies have developed the skills, built the networks, and fuelled the passion that has allowed them to go on to lead change beyond Oaktree.

As Kaisha, one of our Alumni, shares, "I work in evaluation, and in order to truly assess impact, you have to look back five, ten, even twenty years. It's only now, after we have spent years out in the world, that we can truly understand and share how much Oaktree has impacted us".

So we thought we'd use our 20th anniversary to understand Oaktree's internal impact, and ask our Alumni to help tell our story. **Our 20 year impact report is centred around key themes that emerged in conversation with our Alumni**, as we asked them to describe how they have been impacted by Oaktree. Interwoven into these themes are case studies from our advocacy, international programming, and fundraising portfolios.

In a world characterised by insecurity, we believe that young people are the key to building a better future. We hope that our story helps prove this to you, and that this report inspires you to join us in leading, demanding and creating change.

# Foreword

## A note from the author

Because of this report, I have had the opportunity to meet with the most inspiring people. I've spoken with CEOs, internationally-acclaimed advocates, teachers, public servants, lawyers, and development practitioners. I've spoken with people who are a couple of years into their professional life, as well as established executives who have built their own multinational companies. I've spoken to people across Australia, as well as in Hong Kong, London and New York. This diverse group of people have one thing in common: they used to volunteer with Oaktree.



As a 21 year old whose formal career began a few short years ago, access to these people and these conversations is a luxury that most people my age simply do not have. But being able to access something at an age far younger than our society typically allows is the essence of Oaktree. This organisation that we've been a part of over the last 20 years has helped us break into spaces that don't really want to include young people - from policymaking to advocacy, from fundraising to international development. And now, two decades on, this organisation has enabled young people like myself to connect with incredible mentors across the world, mentors who make the time to support us simply because of how much Oaktree means to them.

This report started out as a way to qualitatively capture the impact that Oaktree has had on its volunteers. But I had it the wrong way round. Our volunteers aren't the beneficiaries of Oaktree, Oaktree is the beneficiary of its volunteers. Volunteers are Oaktree, and it is only through their passion, creativity and grit that Oaktree has been able to lead, demand and create change over the last 20 years.

So what I now present to you is the story of Oaktree, co-written by the people who have shaped it into what it is today. Writing this report (and meeting with the Alumni it features) has expanded my thinking, taught me so much, and inspired me to continue on my social impact journey. I hope it does the same for you.

- Ava Rego  
Business Development Manager





# Meet Our Alumni

## Hugh Evans

Hugh Evans co-founded Oaktree in 2003. He is the co-Founder and CEO of Global Citizen, the world's leading international advocacy organisation working to end extreme poverty now, an internationally renowned humanitarian, and one of the most recognised leaders in international development. Under his leadership, Global Citizen has grown into an unstoppable movement of tens of millions of people around the world taking action to defeat poverty, defend our planet, and address the systemic barriers that keep people trapped in inequality.

Over the course of his career, Hugh has been named Young Australian of the Year (2004), one of Fast Company's Most Creative People in Business (2014), and Billboard magazine's Humanitarian of the Year (2015); he featured on Forbes' 30 Under 30 list (2012), and received GQ's Man of the Year Award for Chivalry (2014) and the Diamond Ball Award for humanitarian work from Rihanna's Clara Lionel Foundation (2018).

Hugh holds a Bachelor of Law and Science from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, and a Master of Philosophy in International Relations from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, and has received Honorary Doctorates from Utah State University in Utah, St. John's University in New York and Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He is based in New York City.



## Nic Mackay



Nic Mackay co-founded Oaktree in 2023. He is a privileged white Australian, who cares very little about the quality of our nation's sporting teams and very much about the quality of his daily coffee. He has had the opportunity to help start, grow and guide some of the world's largest and most influential social justice organisations.

Nic is the National Director of NAYBA Australia, which helps churches across the country to love their neighbour and transform their neighbourhoods. He is also the author of "Faith, Death & Pills", which tells the story of his journey to faith, the death of his first child, and his personal experience of mental ill-health.

Nic holds an Arts/Law degree, which he's never really used, and received the Australian Leadership Award, which he's never really understood. He lives in Melbourne after spending several years in South Africa – the homeland of his wife, Dawn – and is the father of two children. In his spare time, he likes to run long distances up tall mountains.

## Nick Allardice

Nick Allardice co-founded Live Below the Line and was General Manager at Oaktree from 2009-11. He is a social change entrepreneur and advocate, with a history of creating and leading high impact campaigns, movements and organisations on national and global issues.

Nick is the founder and former CEO of Change.org, the fastest growing web platform for social



change in the world, with more than 700,000 users in Australia and more than 20 million globally using Change.org to run campaigns on the issues they care about. Nick has previously held roles at the executive or board level of The Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Make Poverty History and OzGREEN.

## Kareem El-Ansary

Kareem El-Ansary was national director for Live Below the Line from 2017-18. He is now the Principal Advisor on Youth Policy to the Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, The Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP.



In this role, Kareem is leading the Albanese Government's policy agenda in the Youth Portfolio which is responsible for engagement with more than 4.5 million young Australians aged 12 to 25 years.

Prior to this role, Kareem was a Senior Government Strategy Consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and prior to that worked as a Policy Advisor in the Australian Government specialising in social and economic policy.

In 2019, Kareem served as Australia's 21st Youth Representative to the United Nations where he led a nation-wide consultation tour which reached over 10,000 young Australians in every federal electorate. As part of this role, Kareem represented young Australians at the 74th UN General Assembly in New York and published a leading national report on young Australians.

Kareem spent four years as a Non-Executive Director at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), including as Chair of the Board in 2022 and is currently the Curator of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers Hub in Canberra.

## Yasmin Poole

Yasmin Poole was a Community Leader for Politics at Oaktree from 2016-17. She now seeks to challenge policymakers to think differently. Her vision is for Australia to become a global leader in intersectional policymaking, with a Parliament that truly reflects the diversity of our communities.

Yasmin is Plan International's National Ambassador, advocating for young women to be heard in Australian politics. She regularly provides commentary on Australian TV and radio, such as Q+A, The Drum, and ABC News. Yasmin is the Non-Executive Board Director of OzHarvest, Australia's leading food waste charity, and previously worked on gender equality campaigns for the World Bank in the Pacific region.

In 2021, Yasmin was recognised as the Martin Luther King Jr Center's Youth Influencer of the Year.

She is currently studying intersectional public policy through a MSt in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship.







## Duncan Lockard

Duncan Lockard was Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer at Oaktree over the period of 2008-11.

He has worked at Change.org since 2013, and is now VP and Head of Finance and Strategy. Change.org is the fastest growing web platform for social change in the world, with more than 700,000 users in Australia and more than 20 million globally using Change.org to run campaigns on the issues they care about.

Duncan has previously consulted for Social Ventures Australia, and worked as an analyst for McKinsey and Company.



## Lani Cutuli

Lani Cutuli was director of national teams and state director of NSW for Oaktree, from 2018-21. She is now working as a community liaison officer for the Stroke Recovery Association.

Prior to this she was working for Cerebral Palsy Alliance. She is also completing her masters of public international diplomacy at Macquarie University.

## Emma Clampett

Emma Clampett has been an International Partnership Manager and the Director of International Youth Exchange at Oaktree from 2014-17. She is experienced in gender equality across Asia and the Pacific and skilled in feminist program and partnerships management.

She is currently the Program Manager, Leadership at the International Women's Development Agency, working with partners in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste focused on gender equality. Since leaving Oaktree she has worked in women's leadership, prevention of gender based violence, movement strengthening and feminist organisational capacity strengthening.

Emma is interested in feminist approaches to international development and working in collaborative partnerships with women's rights and civil society organisations across Asia and the Pacific to support systemic and sustainable change.



## Emily Chugg

Emily Chugg was a Grants and Philanthropy Coordinator at Oaktree from 2020-21. This involved researching opportunities for funding, writing grant applications and supporting our overseas partners in Cambodia and Timor-Leste to develop their own grant writing skills.

She has completed a Bachelor of International Development at the Australian Catholic University. She is now working with the Victorian Government, providing support to social enterprises across the State. She feels very privileged to have been involved with an organisation like Oaktree and is excited to see the ongoing impacts it will have on young people in the region.



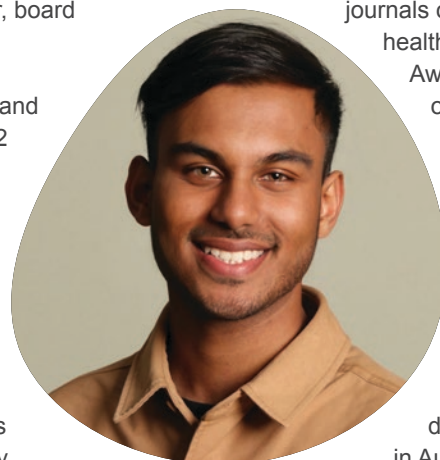
## Jahin Tanvir

Jahin Tanvir was a Community Engagement Officer at Oaktree in 2020. He is now the CEO of the Australian School of Entrepreneurship, 3-time TEDx speaker, board director, and social commentator.

As an award-winning advocate for young people, and diversity and inclusion, Jahin was named the 2022 Young Australian of the Year finalist whilst also receiving the 2021 Young Canberra Citizen of the Year in Individual Community Service. Jahin is a Board Director at the Adolescent Health Association of Australia, a UNICEF Young Ambassador and Movember Ambassador. Jahin is the Founder of Breathe., an EdTech social enterprise providing public speaking education to young and marginalised communities around Australia, which has now been acquired by the ASE Group.

He is an advisor for the Australian Department of Health, has guest lectured and contributed to medical journals on the issue of youth mental health, and received the 2021 Zest Awards Outstanding Youth Leader of the year for his work in assisting multicultural communities in Western Sydney. Jahin also represented Australia at United Nations and WHO conferences in 2021.

As a first-generation migrant, His vision is to empower people from diverse backgrounds in decision-making and conversations in Australia, representing the multiculturalism of Australia.



## Rich Fleming

Rich Fleming was the Live Below the Line campaign and is now a Lead Product Manager at Canva. He's worked for change.org, avaaaz.org, and Global Citizen.

Most of the time you can find him in British Columbia, Canada with his wife and three kids, but currently he's back in Australia for a few years.



# Eva Mackinley

Eva Mackinley was a Tasmanian State Team Manager, and worked on various campaigns at Oaktree including the Roadtrip to End Poverty and Live Below the Line from 2010 to 2013. She has since had a long and varied career in the area of social good.

With a passion for communications, Eva has worked on peer to peer campaigns like Live Below the Line and Polished Man. In 2015 she started The Last Straw, a campaign to reduce the use of plastic straws in venues around Australia that had nearly 1000 members including the iconic Sydney Opera House. Eva has a Bachelor of International Studies with first class Honours at Deakin University. Recognised as a General Sir John Monash Foundation Scholar and a Rotary Peace Fellow, she holds a Masters in International Relations and Security Studies with distinction.

Currently, Eva leads communications at ygap, an international development organisation supporting entrepreneurs in Kenya, South Africa, the Pacific Islands and Australia to thrive. Her next challenge is as Public Relations Lead with Madagascar-based social enterprise Onja.

For her work, Eva has been recognised as a Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia fellow for 2019 and as one of the Australian Financial Review's 100 Women of Influence in 2018.



# Kaisha Crupi

Kaisha Crupi was Head of Community Leaders in Victoria and a Schools4Schools manager at Oaktree from 2013-17. Kaisha is skilled at all things monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) across the Asia-Pacific.

After leaving Oaktree where she learnt about the power of good MEL practice,



she completed her Masters in Evaluation, where she focused on feminist approaches to evaluation to further decolonise evaluation approaches and to ensure MEL is inclusive and is used for transformation and social justice action.

Kaisha prides herself in ensuring MEL is utilisation-focused and that all voices are included in MEL design and delivery.

# Suhail Bindra

Suhail Bindra was the Director of Legal at Oaktree in 2018. He graduated from the IB Diploma Programme with a perfect score of 45 points and obtained his LL.B. and PCLL from HKU as a HKSAR

Government Scholar. He also holds a Master of Public and International Law from the Melbourne Law School with First Class Honours. He was taught by Professor Hilary Charlesworth, now a Judge at the International Court of Justice.

After his time at Oaktree, Suhail worked for a law firm and numerous non-profit organisations in Hong Kong. He currently teaches at the HKU Business School tutoring undergraduates in business law, company law & corporate social responsibility, and recently received his Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Outside of work, Suhail runs legal education courses for ethnically diverse school children with EmpowerU and serves as a Board Director at Hong Kong Academy, an international school, and Migrasia Global Solutions Limited, an organisation that provides high-quality education, information and assistance to migrants and underserved communities in Hong Kong.



# Ashley Wild

Ashley Wild has been the Timor-Leste Projects Officer from 2021-21, and a Campaigns Officer at Oaktree from 2015-18. Ashley is now a climate scientist and international development practitioner.

After completing Honours research on Disaster Risk Reduction with the Bureau of Meteorology in 2021 he's been working in Timor-Leste, first as a research assistant into Youth unemployment, and then as the Forestry Certification Officer working to plant trees and facilitating farmers to access international



carbon offset markets. Now he is completing a PhD at RMIT using satellites to improve monitoring of drought and cyclone winds.

He currently lives in Melbourne and in addition to Timor-Leste has spent time in Kenya, India, and Malaysia. He is optimistic about the future of electrification and culturally-sensitive technology uptake to adapt to climate change, and is excited to help amplify the voice of Pacific neighbours directly to politicians

# Kevin Hawkins

Kevin Hawkins was involved in Oaktree between 2013-16, working and volunteering on the Live Below the Line team, where he helped Oaktree raise over \$4.7 million over three campaigns.

That continues to be his career highlight to date; he peaked early. After spending a few more years working in fundraising and communications at WaterAid Australia, Kevin decided to become a humble secondary school English and Humanities teacher.

He currently works at Wantirna College, and hasn't felt the need to open LinkedIn or attend a networking soiree in roughly four years.



# Jayme Ellis

Jayme Ellis has been Queensland State Director and a Generator at Oaktree from 2011-2015. She is now an experienced marketing professional with a creative mindset, seeking innovative ways to build a better future for the world.

As the Community and Programs Manager at LUÜNA in Hong Kong, Jayme promotes shifting the narrative around menstruation, demanding better for our bodies and the earth. LUÜNA partners with companies and schools to close the gender health gap by providing expert educational programs and sustainable menstrual care amenities. For this, LUÜNA has received the United Nations Social Impact Awards for Women's Empowerment.

In addition to her work at LUÜNA, in 2021, Jayme founded the volunteer-run movement, Take Out Plastic. Working to close the loop on fashion waste, today, this community runs Hong Kong's largest second-hand clothing exchange TOP Swop!







## Peter Willis

Peter Willis was General Manager of Campaigns at Oaktree from 2010-12. He is now the General Manager - Providers at NDIS provider Hireup. Hireup supports people with disability to find, hire and manage support workers that meet their needs and suit their interests. Peter sits on Hireup's executive team and leads a team that shares Hireup's workforce with other NDIS providers.

Between Oaktree and Hireup, Peter worked in government and as a management consultant in Australia, India and the USA. His work has been focused on improving outcomes in social services. Peter holds a Master of Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of Melbourne.

## Elyse McInerney

Elyse McInerney volunteered for Oaktree from 2011-2014 as the Papua New Guinea Country Director. She is now a program manager and policy advisor with a key focus on family violence, gender equality and feminist practice.

She has worked across Australia, the Pacific, Asia and Africa, and led projects focused on employment, family and gender-based violence, financial capability, women's leadership, regional and international advocacy, coalition strengthening, education, child protection and humanitarian response. She is particularly passionate about ensuring lived experiences inform policy and program practice.



## Alicia (Bardie) Barclay-Sutton

Alicia (Bardie) was a Policy Officer and Regular Giving Manager at Oaktree from 2017-2018. She has over a decade of experience working with NGO's such as World Vision, Oaktree and Australian Red Cross.

She currently works for Save the Children Australia supporting local implementation of development and humanitarian projects in Asia. An alumni of



the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP), she has completed assignments in Indonesia and Mongolia.

Alongside her work, she currently volunteers as President of the Melbourne Development Circle, a not-for-profit community group, and is slowly completing a Masters in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development at ANU.

## Kat Theophanus

Kat Theophanous was a Communications Officer at Oaktree in 2010. She is now the Labor Member for Northcote and the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health.

She began her working life at SBS where she was a part of the Government Relations team working to secure the future of the multicultural broadcaster. Before entering Parliament, Kat worked alongside Hon. Fiona Richardson, the previous Labor Member for Northcote and former Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence. Later, as the Member for Northcote, her work to promote women's equality continued in her role as Co-Chair of the State Government's Gender Equality Advisory Committee.

Kat has previously Chaired the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee and the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, and has been a member of the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

Kat is committed to working across policy areas such as social justice, education, gender equality, environment and energy reform, housing, multiculturalism, economic opportunity and of course – women's health.



## Lloyd Alderman

Lloyd Alderman was the CFO at Oaktree from 2013-2015.

He is passionate about improving systems to enhance social and community outcomes. He is currently doing this at Orygen, an innovative, youth mental health organisation, driving a revolution in mind.





## Empowerment is not a buzzword:

### Youth engagement, inclusion and voice

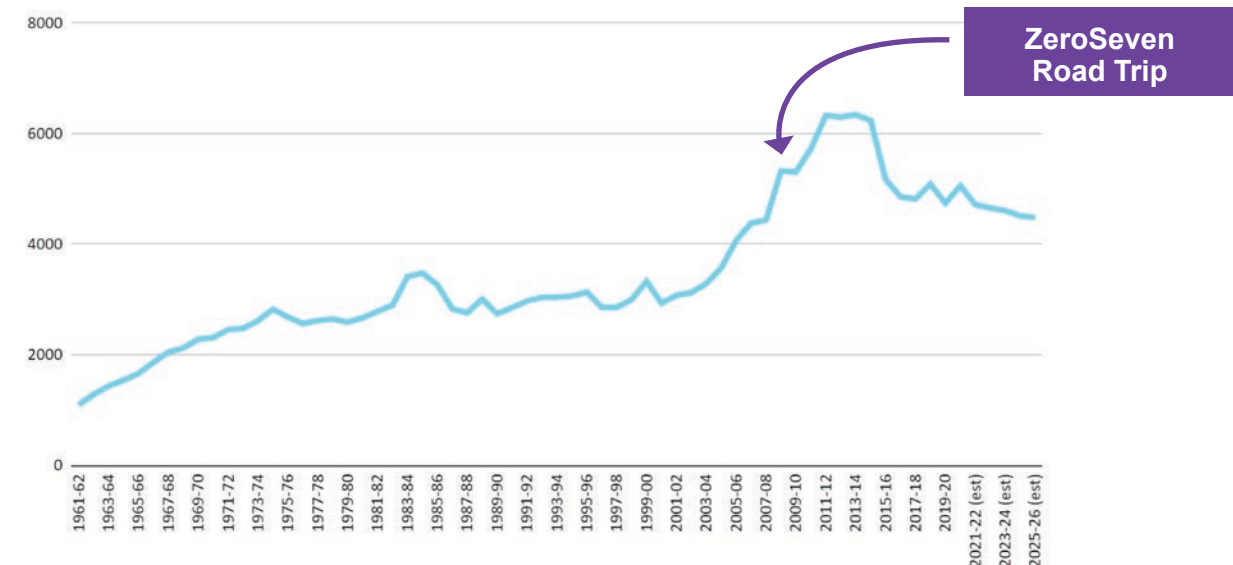
“At Oaktree I realised that you don’t need to be embarrassed of being young or optimistic.

Young people are a diverse and powerful driving force. And optimism doesn’t mean that you think “everything is great”, rather that you believe that “things can be better”.

We need to believe that things can be better and that’s what transformation means.”

- Yasmin Poole

Total Australian aid (inflation adjusted, 2022-23 \$AU, millions)



Nick Allardice sums it up best:

“This campaign was only really successful because we didn’t know any better. Everyone said it wouldn’t work, but Oaktree gives young people the space and support to swing for the fences, so we did. And so our election campaign led to the single greatest increase in Australian aid commitments in decades.”

So, right from this tremendous success in 2007, Oaktree has fought to give young people the space they need to transform the world - even and especially when other people dismiss us as too young, too naive or too optimistic. As Yasmin Poole shares, “Oaktree taught me that if one doesn’t have power individually, there is power in coming together and building something. And that is something young people can do - we can come together and build a vision for the future”.

## WE SHOULD BE SEEN AND HEARD: YOUTH IN ADVOCACY

As Kevin, one of our Alumni shares, “Oaktree gives young people responsibility and empowers them at a time in their lives when they have the time and energy to invest in things they are passionate about”. This sums up our last 20 years of advocacy - of young people investing in and succeeding at fighting for systemic change.

In 2007, our **Zero Seven Roadtrip** took 700 youth ambassadors and volunteers across Australia with one goal in mind: holding the Australian government accountable to their promise to increase their foreign aid commitment. The Roadtrip was held to coincide with the date 07/07/07 - the midway point of the



ZeroSeven Concert Poster, 2007

2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals. For 7 days, 700 Ambassadors roadtripped through 17 cities and regional electorates across Australia to Sydney. They spoke to over 50,000 Australians directly and reached a media audience of over 11,000,000 people. We educated thousands of Australians on the importance of foreign aid, which wasn’t easy, and faced a lot of scepticism. But as Hugh Evans shares, “Having people bet against you is sometimes the best thing. When people underestimate you, your ability and desire to prove them wrong becomes powerful.” And in 2007, our refusal to give up paid off when Kevin Rudd announced at our culmination event in Sydney that Australia would scale up its foreign aid spending to 0.5 percent of gross national income by 2015.

## A SEAT AT THE FEDERAL TABLE: YOUTH IN POLICYMAKING

“If the work is impacting young people, we must have a seat at the table. When organisations like Oaktree advocate to ensure that young people have a voice in policy making, they help to improve the efficacy of those policies, ensuring they are fit for purpose to deliver the intended outcomes.”

- Kareem El-Ansary

“Bottom line: young people’s voices should be heard and there are very limited opportunities in Australia to do this in a meaningful way. Oaktree gives young people a way to contribute to the conversation.” This sentiment, shared by Yasmin, taps into the heart of what we do.

Case in point: when the **COVID-19 pandemic** hit, our team recognised the disproportionate and adverse impact this pandemic would have on young people in our region. So, in 2021, we made our voices heard by meeting with Senator Janet Rice to share our insights on how the Australian government could help young people recover from the pandemic.

Senator Rice then spoke on our behalf in Parliament, urging the government to take responsibility by pushing the solutions our team proposed. These included increasing the foreign aid budget, and increasing Australia’s contribution to COVAX.



“I particularly want to mention the impact of COVID-19 on young people in the Pacific. I met with some wonderful young folk from Oaktree yesterday, who told me about the complex issues faced by young people in our region. When 50 per cent of the global population is under the age of 30, and nine out of 10 people live in countries classified as developing, the Indo-Pacific is experiencing a ‘youth bulge’, with 1.7 billion young people under the age of 25. Those young people are facing an increasing set of really complex challenges. Many face unemployment, or they work in insecure or informal employment. And that’s before we start talking about the compounding impacts of the pandemic and the climate emergency that we face... So we call upon the Australian government... We call on the government to take more meaningful action and, in particular, to support young people across the Indo-Pacific.”

- Senator Janet Rice

*Treasury Laws Amendment (COVID-19 Economic Response No. 2) Bill 2021 - Second Reading, August 2021*

And we didn’t stop there. In 2021, we also engaged 182 young people from across Australia, Cambodia, and Timor Leste to discuss the role of young people in the Covid-19 pandemic recovery. This discussion was led by a panel featuring former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and four other youth experts: Ivo Barreto, co-facilitator of our FoLiHa program in Timor-Leste; Oli Le Lievre, Australian agriculture and sustainability activist; Lilian Arnold-Rendel, First Nations activist; Yasmin Poole, Oaktree alumni and intersectional youth activist; and our very own CEO Thenu Herath. We established that young people must act to ensure we rebuild a more just and sustainable future.

Kevin Rudd encouraged Oaktree to lead young people and “get in there, lobby furiously, grab the ear of the political class, and be a pain to them as in fact, 15 years ago, [Oaktree and our foreign aid campaign] was with [him]”.

Our advocacy efforts have not just influenced existing politicians, but supported emerging ones. Kat Theophanous, MP for Northcote, shares how her time at Oaktree influenced her to go into politics: “My dad was elected when I was two, so the political world always swirled around me. But I was never very engaged in it. It wasn’t until I volunteered at Oaktree that I realised that politics could be for young people too. I remember being struck by the feeling of being surrounded by so many passionate and motivated young people who were politically engaged in a really significant and tangible way. This was pivotal in shaping my journey into politics”. Kat adds, “we need more young people in politics. When I got in I was 31, and we had quite a few young people elected alongside me at the 2018 election. In my time over the last five years, having younger voices in parliament has made such a difference to our discussions, and has significantly shaped what gets put on the agenda, and what gets pushed forward”.



*The Panellists, Young People & the COVID-19 Recovery (2021)*



*Kevin Rudd speaks on the panel, encouraging young people to lobby the federal government for vaccine equity in the COVID-19 recovery.*

Oaktree strives to be this young voice in our advocacy work, and we are incredibly proud to work with politicians, young and experienced, to drive discussion and action on issues that will impact all of our generation in the future.

Case in point: In 2022, we decided to write and publish a participatory research paper, ‘**Young People and COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges**’, in order to get youth needs in a post-pandemic context on the policy making agenda. One of the report’s co-authors - Eleanor Hewitt - shares more about it.

“At the start of 2022, Oaktree kicked off what would be a year long research project, ‘*Young People and Covid-19 in the Asia-Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges*’ - a report written by young people, for young people. After an extensive literature review the team identified there was a huge gap in youth-focussed research from the pandemic, a lack of Asia-Pacific voices and little study on any opportunities from COVID-19. Relying on Oaktree’s strength of partnerships, we worked with close to 25 youth led/youth focussed organisations in the region to interview young people and understand their experience of COVID-19.

From these interviews we heard stories of ingenuity, resilience, kindness, struggle and of course, hope. The youth organisations came from across the region, and whilst there were differences it was clear to see that the pandemic really was a shared experience that transcended borders. But we didn’t want our research to just sit on a shelf, we wanted it to be used to support young people in the region.

To make it actionable, the research culminated in 5 key recommendations; Invest in youth entrepreneurialism, Increase youth representation and voices, Increase preparedness for future disasters, Improve digital access for disadvantaged people and Increase mental health support for young people.

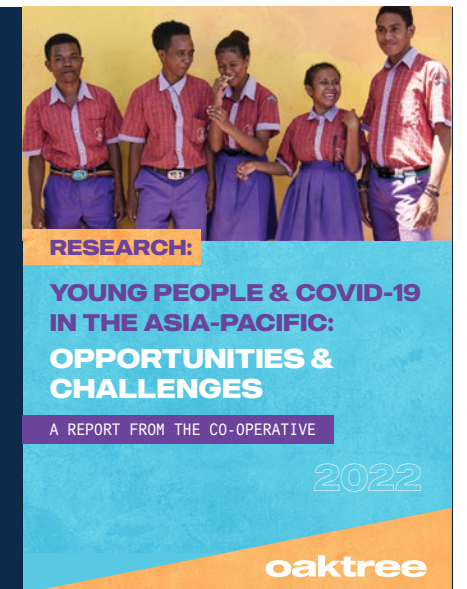
Armed with our findings and recommendations we have had meetings with DFAT, MP Josh Burns, MP Kylea Tink, the Minister for International Development Pat Conroy’s Office and the Honourable Penny Wong’s Office. In early 2023, we spoke at the DFAT Public Roundtable on the ‘Inquiry into supporting Democracy in our Region’.

These have been incredible experiences for the team who worked on the report, being able to sit at the table and speak to people in parliament about our work and raise the voice of young people across the region.

But this is just the beginning, we hope to continue to champion the voice of youth through the report to drive systemic change and create more opportunities for young people across the region.”

*Young People & COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific: Opportunities & Challenges (2023)*

Read full report [here](#)



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Invest in Youth Entrepreneurialism
2. Increase Youth Representation and Voices
3. Increase Preparedness for Future Disasters
4. Improve Digital Access for Disadvantaged Demographics
5. Increase Mental Health Support for Young People



*Thenu (CEO) and Eleanor (Impact Research Manager) meet with MP Kylea Tink*



**BEING YOUNG IS UNDERRATED:  
YOUTH IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

“Speaking as someone who’s been in the development field my entire life, there’s no such thing as a ‘development expert’. Everyone is learning. Oaktree has the licence to show ‘adults’ how it needs to be done - with the energy that only young people can bring.”

- Hugh Evans

The development sector isn’t the best at making space for young voices. As Emma Clampett explains, “there are very few opportunities for young people to get their foot in the door - to connect to and get experience with international development, social justice and social movements. Entry level doesn’t mean entry level; it means at least two years of experience, and if not for Oaktree, how are you meant to get that?”

In recent years, the sector has started to wake up to the value of including young perspectives in development practice. However, this doesn’t always happen in the way it should. Yasmin shares that she has experienced “a lot of organisations that are progressive and committed, but even in these contexts, young people tend to be totally tokenised, and brought out only for photo ops.” For Yasmin, that’s what makes Oaktree different: “Oaktree is

youth-driven, youth-minded, and youth-centred, and that’s a really powerful thing. It gives young people a platform, but also the tools to understand systems better. This in turn gives young people practical insight into how to genuinely build something, and that is essential.”

Over the last twenty years, Oaktree has prided itself on the way that it has given young people the chance to step up in the development space. For Yasmin, “Oaktree’s philosophy is basically that young people who want to be involved, can be involved. This is powerful for young people who might not have had a lot of opportunities growing up.” And this couldn’t be more true. Our volunteers have launched million-dollar campaigns, established international partnerships across the globe, and designed development programs on poverty-eradication, education, and youth-empowerment.



International Youth Exchange, Cambodia 2016. Youth forum on acting for climate resilience

Case in point: the **International Youth Exchange** program, which took young volunteers overseas to meet and work with young people from one of five partner organisations: Pravah (India), CYC (India), The Voice Inc (Papua New Guinea), Youth Against Corruption Association (Papua New Guinea), ActionAid (Myanmar), and Youth Resources Development Program (Cambodia).

From 2016-19, the program involved 12 trip participants, and two exchange trips with Myanmar, and two visits to Pravah and CYC in India. In 2017, representatives from Oaktree, The Voice Inc., YACA, and an alumni from the Australia-Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue presented a panel with the Lowy Institute on ‘Engaging Young Australians and Papua New Guineans in the Political Process’.

In 2017, we also held a workshop to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration between all five organisations at our headquarters in Melbourne.

This program is one of the coolest things we’ve done. Emma sums it up:

“Young people have such a huge role to play in social movements and the development space. We are able to connect with others across the globe like never before. And Oaktree, with programs like the International Youth Exchange, has been at the forefront of this.”



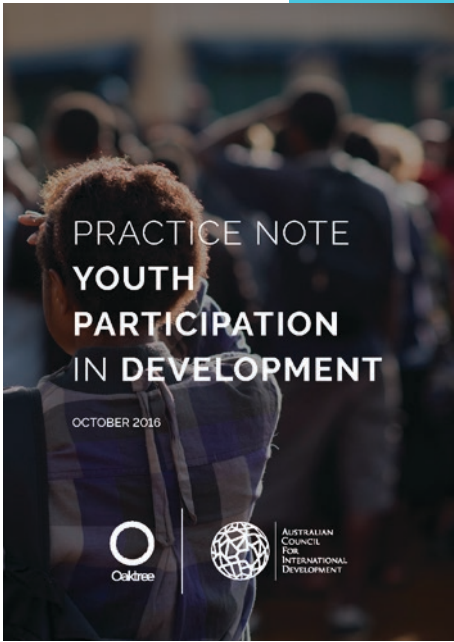
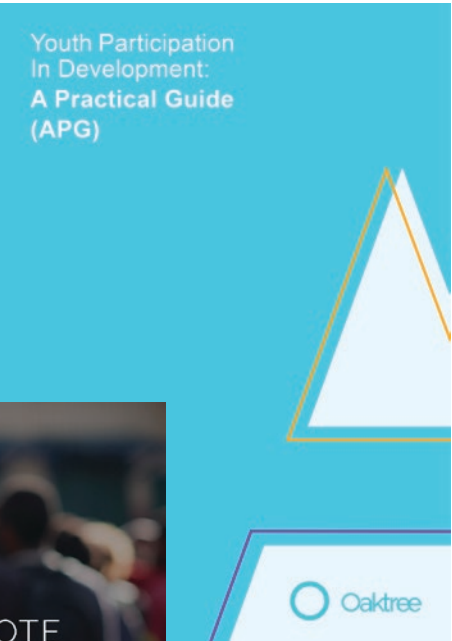
International Youth Exchange, Cambodia 2016



Our twenty years of experience have helped us become a best practice organisation for youth in international development, and we continue to share all we have learned with the rest of the sector.

In 2016, we published a **practice note** with the Australian Council for International Development, outlining the importance of youth participation in development. The note also provides guidance to practitioners on how to more actively engage youth in their programs.

Then in 2021, we went further and published **Youth Participation in Development: A Practical Guide**. This policy guide provides INGOs with actionable advice and tools on how to increase youth participation and mainstream youth empowerment within development work.



Oaktree Publications in 2016 and 2021



International Youth Exchange, India 2015



International Youth Exchange, Cambodia 2016

# LIVING BELOW THE LINE: YOUTH IN FUNDRAISING

“We took a big swing, creating, designing and implementing the campaign within 3 months. For the first 10 weeks I thought it was failing, and then it went and raised more than double the amount Oaktree had ever raised.”  
- Nick Allardice



“The impact of Live Below the Line does matter to me because we live in a world where everything is interconnected. And although certain issues might not be affecting me personally they are affecting people that I know, [and] people that I don't know. It's important to me that I'm doing my part to help them.”  
- Year 10 Student  
2018 Live Below the Line Participant

Live Below the Line is a perfect example of what young people can accomplish when you back them. Back in 2010, we realised that Australians didn't know enough about the complexity of extreme poverty, and that they also didn't have many opportunities to do something about it.

Live Below the Line Co-Founder Rich Fleming says that he and his fellow co-founder Nick Allardice, were sitting at the dinner table, “talking about how challenging [they] found it to build empathy in developed countries. Especially around what it is like to experience poverty. He adds, “we were working with heavy information all the time in our jobs, but information alone wasn't creating empathy”. Rich continues, “we discussed the mathematics of the global poverty line, and thought about what it would really be like to live under it. Nick said to me, “there's no way you could do that”, and that's how it all began. I acknowledged that it definitely wouldn't be possible with accommodation, but I was willing to try with everything else. So I lived under the line for 27 days in September, 2009.”

And so Live Below the Line was born. Oaktree partnered with the Global Poverty Project (now Global Citizen), and launched the campaign in 2010. The campaign asked everyday Australians to spend less than \$2 a day on their food and drink for five days - essentially 'living below' the Australian equivalent of the Extreme Poverty line (US \$1.25). This process not only allowed participants to raise funds that directly supported our international programming, but gave them the opportunity to reflect on how their lives contrasted with the lives of those who experience extreme poverty.

For many participants, the fact that extreme poverty cannot truly be simulated was eye-opening in itself, exposing the complex and interconnecting ways in which poverty impacts people around the world. Rich shares that the team “envisioned this challenge as an interesting way to build empathy. It was a response to the question that would come up again and again: “How do we bring the conversation about poverty to the dinner table?”.

The campaign was a tremendous success, not just in terms of its ability to build empathy, but also in terms of its capacity to raise funds for our international programs. In its first year, just under 2000 participants raised half a million dollars. And it only grew from there. Eva, who was a volunteer at the time, discusses how in the second year, “during campaign week, everyone was in the office every single day. Every morning, we would meet to figure out what we could change, and how we could innovate. We were so incredibly invested.”



Co-founder Nick Allardice adds, “the second year of Live Below the Line, the team was terrified that we wouldn’t be able to follow the first year. And then, in its first week - we had two news crews in the office, watching the numbers go up on the website, and we watched the line cross one million dollars. That moment, breaking a million, was something I will never forget.”

Live Below the Line also gave young Australians the opportunity to lead and support a multi-million dollar campaign, something that few young people ever get to experience. Kevin started by participating in the campaign as a university student, and was then “pinching [himself] two years later when he was running the whole thing”. Every volunteer who worked on the campaign had the opportunity to develop fundraising, communication, relationship building and campaign management skills, and were able to apply these skills to support Oaktree’s international impact in a massive way. Kevin shares, “you start every campaign with zero dollars, and when you finally reach those first big milestones, they become such special moments that you can celebrate with the team. I remember those moments where you would build a relationship with a celebrity and they would finally agree to do the campaign. And then you would turn on The Project a few weeks later, and the celebrity you helped recruit would be sitting there talking about “Live Below the Line”.

These moments and successes helped generate income for Oaktree that supported our international programming for years to come. Oaktree could not be where it is today without the astonishing success of this campaign, and the incredibly hard work and dedication of our volunteers.

In the decade since, Live Below the Line has continued to raise awareness and give everyday Australians the chance to make a difference. In 2022, the campaign was reimagined to more deeply investigate the multidimensional nature of poverty. The fact that we could recognise some problematic elements of the original campaign, and change for the better so rapidly, is a testament to the unique role we play as a youth-led organisation in the international development space.

As Elyse explains, “our sector faces a lot of challenges and has a lot of room for improvement. But big organisations have so many limitations that constrain their ability to change. As a smaller, youth-led organisation, Oaktree is actually able to think constantly about how to do things better and actually implement those ideas into practice. That is something I am really proud of.”

Live Below the Line now asks participants to design their own campaign to take action against five lines of injustice: food, energy, shelter, waste and technology. These factors often underlie extreme poverty, and are also contributing to the ongoing climate crisis. Live Below the Line now asks participants to engage with the injustices they might be contributing to in their own lives, and educate themselves on how one or more of the five lines contribute to global poverty.

In this way, the new Live Below the Line continues to build empathy in a modern context, spreading awareness about the structural factors that cause poverty, and how all of us, no matter where we live, have a role to play in overcoming injustice for all.

## Imposter Activist Syndrome

“Oaktree (harshly) taught me that when one door closes, another opens. Being okay with rejection has been instrumental for the rest of my life. You just can’t give up - and that is the basis of advocacy.”

- Jahin Tanvir

“To see young people who weren’t embarrassed that they were young, who were saying ‘we want better and we want it now’ - that sense of agency and empowerment I had never seen before - I carry that with me in all work and life now.

Oaktree taught me to speak up and stand strong.”

- Yasmin Poole

Oaktree has raised a generation of young people with what we like to call **Activist Syndrome**: which is the opposite of imposter syndrome, and gives people extreme confidence in their advocacy, in spite of numerous obstacles and cynical input, because they know they can make a difference.

### 2022 Participant Quotes

“We believe in being the change we want to see in the world. We hope that through this challenge we can inspire others to continue fighting injustice everywhere!”

- University of Technology Sydney, Society of Communications  
\$1,767 raised

“I believe every single person has the ability to positively impact future generations.”

- Sam, \$735 Raised





# WHAT MAKES AN ACTIVIST?

## IN CONVERSATION WITH NICK ALLARDICE

Nick Allardice founded Live Below the Line, and is the founder and current CEO of Change.org, a global petition and social impact platform. He shares his insights into activism and how Oaktree is uniquely positioned to foster it.

"While I was at Oaktree, we designed a program to train uni students in "changemaker skills"- the skills you need to make a difference. To design the curriculum, I interviewed the 100 most successful activists in Australia. I expected to discover certain hard skills that are crucial to successful activism - like confidence, communication or public speaking - but none of that actually matters.

The main thing that defines successful activists is that all of them have had a win fairly early in their activist journeys. This win gives them the resilience, determination and confidence that helps them persevere, even when things get tough later on in their careers.

So basically, what emerging-activists need most is some form of validation that what they are doing matters, and that they can have a big impact. This helps them survive any future obstacles, because they have the confidence of knowing that they have made it work before.

That was Oaktree for me: it gave me the space to dream big and get a bunch of wins under my belt early on. These wins gave me an unreasonable level of confidence and resilience that have led me to where I am today.



For 20 years, Oaktree has raised the next generation of activists by giving them the opportunity to make a meaningful, visible, difference from a young age. Activist Syndrome runs rampant in our teams.

In 2010, we collected 50,000 signatures to support the Act to End Poverty, a petition calling on the Australian Government to reaffirm its commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This resulted in it being passed through both the House of Representatives and the Senate."

## MEET JAHIN:

Multicultural youth advocate. CEO of the Australian School of Entrepreneurship. Three-time TEDx speaker. UNICEF Young Ambassador and 2022 Young Australian of the Year finalist. Named on the 40 under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians in 2022. And former Oaktree volunteer.

For Jahin, "Oaktree was phenomenal in starting my advocacy journey. It gave me the confidence to go to the media without imposter syndrome - thanks to my time at Oaktree, I could say 'hey I worked at an international development organisation that empowered young people, so I know what I'm talking about'."

Jahin is now a regular media commentator and has appeared on ABC News, ABC's The Drum, Channel 10, and Channel 9. He has also represented Australia at UN and WHO conferences.



Jahin speaking at TEDx Canberra 2022



Jahin speaking at the ACCEL Conference 2022



Oaktree volunteers campaigning to end extreme poverty.



Jahin on ABC's The Drum 2022



MEET YASMIN:

Intersectional youth advocate. Plan International’s National Ambassador. Non-Executive Board Director of AusOzHarvest, Australia’s leading food rescue charity and the YWCA. The Martin Luther King Jr Center’s 2021 Youth Influencer of the Year. And former Oaktree volunteer.

Yasmin says she wouldn’t be where she is today without Oaktree.



Yasmin now speaks at influential conferences, and has appeared alongside figures like Jeffrey Sachs and Malala Yousafzai. She frequently speaks about the power of the youth voice, gender equality and intersectionality.

.....

This anti-imposter mechanism that Oaktree provides extends beyond activism, to all areas of our work. Peter discusses how Oaktree “gave [him] the incredible confidence to believe that [he] could do things in the world that made a difference.” For Peter: “this happened because Oaktree exposed me to lots of really difficult new problems on a regular basis. Every time, I would figure out a solution, and once I did this a couple of times, I realised that I actually could solve difficult new problems. So the next time a problem came up, I would think to myself, ‘I can do this, I’ve already solved five!’”

Kevin adds, “I work as a teacher now, and the main thing is that because of all the high stakes situations I had to

“Oaktree was the first thing I did in terms of activism. After seeing the passion and commitment of these young people, my thought was: ‘Why aren’t we represented in high leadership spaces? We have plenty of powerful ideas and insights, so why do we always have to advocate from the outside?’ This kickstarted my journey as a Youth Advocate.”



deal with and learnt how to overcome at Oaktree, I just don’t sweat the small stuff anymore”. Oaktree therefore gives young people the opportunity to succeed, fail, and learn how to convert failure into success, early on in their professional journeys. This equips them to lead highly impactful and highly resilient careers, where imposter syndrome simply isn’t a factor.

The Grad Pathway with Grit



“With the way the job market and education is today there is nothing more valuable than job experience. Every job asks you for specific real life examples of what they’re looking for.

You can beat around the bush all you want but unless you have some tangible experience you can point to - you can’t succeed.

Oaktree helps young people compete in a competitive post-university system.”

- Lani Cutuli

“My experience at Oaktree was the launchpad for everything I am doing now.

I can trace the trajectory of my career back to those days spent in the office, at meetings, or on leadership retreats.

Oaktree was formative for myself, both professionally and personally.”

- Eva Mackinley

Training weekend 2022 feat. guest speaker Dr. Chrisanta Muli, CEO of One Girl







Training weekend 2022

## After 20 years of upskilling young people with a passion for social change, we are proud to take credit for sending some truly incredible young people out into the world.

When reflecting on their experience, all of the alumni emphasised how Oaktree had kickstarted their professional careers, and provided them with an alternative graduate pathway - one that gave them truly valuable and meaningful experience in the international development sector.

Kareem explains it best: “I owe a lot to Oaktree for opening my eyes to what young people can do. Instead of going down the conventional Grad Program path, which often places you in an entry level position and requires years of experience before you can contribute to strategic issues and decisions, Oaktree provides opportunities for young people to be leaders in their own right. That is both rare and powerful”.

Elyse adds, “I completed my Masters in Development Studies alongside my role as Programs Director for Papua New Guinea at Oaktree. I was one of the few people in my course who had real-life experience, and I did all my uni projects on Papua New Guinea, complementing the work I was doing at Oaktree. I was so lucky to be able to deep-dive and build my practical and theoretical knowledge at the same time”.

Similarly, for Suhail, “Oaktree gives young people the opportunity to upskill in an environment that they usually

wouldn't otherwise experience until towards the end of their careers. Since leaving Oaktree I've worked for a law firm, done pro-bono legal work, and now teach at a university, but the common theme throughout my career has been the desire to create a more just world. Oaktree should be proud of their ability to shape young people at a formative stage of their lives, and open up a meaningful and impactful pathway for their future.”

This is especially important in the current post-pandemic context. Unemployment has risen across the board, but disproportionately and adversely impacted young people just starting out with their careers. According to a Headspace report, 55% of young people reported that the Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted their confidence in securing future employment. As a respondent from the same study explains, “why would anyone hire an adult with no experience in any industry over someone who just lost their job with 20+ experience?”. Oaktree works to overcome this by giving young people valuable experience, boosting their chances of securing future employment.

As Emily Chugg shares, “The unemployment rate for young people at the moment is really high. Supporting young people to build their capacity is something we should be doing and Oaktree does that really well.”

“I owe a lot to Oaktree for opening my eyes to what young people can do.

Instead of going down the conventional Grad Program path, which often places you in an entry level position and requires years of experience before you can contribute to strategic issues and decisions, Oaktree provides opportunities for young people to be leaders in their own right. That is both rare and powerful”.

- Kareem El-Ansary



Training weekend 2022

So, Oaktree is bridging the gap between passionate young students and the workforce. The short version of this is best expressed by Jahin: “Oaktree is so amazing for your resume”. But our impact doesn't stop there. More importantly, Oaktree provides young people with experience that doesn't just look good on a resume, but is truly meaningful and valuable - we put young people in the driving seat of international development.

Case in point: our Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund, which has changed the international development game, and has received sector-wide acclamation for the way it decolonises the developmental relationship.



Training weekend 2022



# DECOLONISING DEVELOPMENT: The Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund

So here's the full story. Oaktree has worked with youth-centric partners in Timor-Leste and Cambodia for over 10 years. From 2012-22 we partnered with an East-Timorese organisation, Ba Futuru, to implement Foin-sa'e Lidera Hamutuk (FoLiHa), which is Tetum for 'Youth Leading Together'.

The project aimed to build the capacity of young people to prevent, manage and resolve violent situations peacefully and non-violently. It did so by training 492 participants in conflict mitigation and resolution. In 2020-21, the program expanded its curriculum, training 50 young people in community action, leadership, conflict resolution and advocacy.

At the conclusion of the project, one of the participants from Manufahi conveyed its tremendous impact: "This training gave me self-confidence, and I now feel more brave about speaking in public and organising activities for the community. After these trainings, I told my 26 peers that we must become leaders, and guide the other youth into a more peaceful way of life. We should not be involved in problems, but be empowered to solve those that happen in our communities."

## Foin-sa'e Lidera Hamutuk (FoLiHa)

- 16 conflict mitigation training sessions
- 492 participants trained, including 212 female participants
- 50 Youth Changemakers trained in community action, leadership, conflict resolution and advocacy

## Project outcomes:

- 90% of participants report an improvement in the relationship between community leaders and young people in their communities of Lautem and Manufahi.
- 96% of participants reported an improved perception of young people in their community.
- 100% of participants reported that they continue to advocate for three main issues they have identified in their community: improving access to education, overcoming water scarcity, and preventing domestic violence.

“This training gave me self-confidence, and I now feel more brave about speaking in public and organising activities for the community... We should not be involved in problems, but be empowered to solve those that happen in our communities.”

However, after a decade of interacting with organisations like Ba Futuru, and implementing projects like FoLiHa in the Asia-Pacific, our team realised that there was a major gap in the sector. There are a lot of local grassroots organisations who operate on the ground and tackle youth-centric development issues across the Asia-Pacific. But these organisations rarely gain the attention of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). And even when they do, these INGOs are often unable to support or partner with them, because these organisations are unregistered. This is often because these small, typically volunteer-run, grassroots organisations do not have the time, money or resources to meet registration requirements such as having an office. And INGOs are not legally able to partner with unregistered organisations because of the legal and compliance risks that arise.

So, our team at Oaktree saw the problem, and we understood why it existed, but we didn't stop there. As young people with fresh eyes, in an organisation that gave us the agency to try something different, we put our minds together and came up with the **Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund** (OYSF).

The Fund operates by offering small, short-term, project-based funding to grassroots, youth-led organisations, even and especially if they are not registered. It therefore enables member-organisations to exercise agency over their own development, overcoming the issues that their communities face in the manner that they deem best. It also mitigates the risks of unregistered partnerships through its smaller- and short-term model, and our co-design approach of working closely and collaboratively with beneficiaries.

And so far, it has been incredibly effective. In 2022 we partnered with five youth-led organisations in Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Tonga. Here's the rundown on all they were able to accomplish.

## Asosiasaun Timoriana in Timor-Leste.

Timoriana are a youth-led organisation focused on environmental awareness and activism.

In 2022, they conducted local consultations and discovered that water scarcity was a significant problem for rural farmers in Mantelolao Village. They then launched an environmental action response program, and planted 500 trees near the village springs, to aid in the revival of water canalisation and help provide sufficient water in the future. They led environmental awareness workshops with young people in the community, and established a group of local young people who continue to monitor environmental conditions. Asosiasaun Timoriana were so successful with their 2022 project that they were interviewed by a national television program on ecological crises in June.

- 500 trees planted

“After our project, the community was full of enthusiasm. Even now, the issue [of water] continues to be a central discussion point among community members.”

- Asosiasaun Timoriana

Timoriana and local young people plant trees near Mantelolao Village springs to improve water canalisation.





**Tonga Women in ICT (TWICT).** TWICT are a youth-led organisation focused on helping women find employment in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) industry.

In 2022, they educated 400 students on cybersecurity and pioneered an initiative for young people to combat cyber crime in Tonga. They also held a STEM Career Day, which gave 150 students access to industry professionals, and opportunities for women in STEM. This Career Day was so successful that it was attended by the Acting Prime Minister of Tonga, and members from Tonga Police, the Ministry of Education & Training, and the Attorney General's Office.

- **400 students received cybersecurity training**
- **150 students attended a Women in STEM Career Day**



High school students attend cybersecurity training



Honoured guests at the Women in STEM Career Day: Acting Prime Minister of Tonga, along with members from Tonga Police, the Ministry of Education & Training, and the Attorney General's Office.

**Youth Leaders Development Program (YLDP) in Timor-Leste.** YLDP operates in six high schools in Dili, working with high school students to develop their leadership and advocacy skills.

In 2022-23, they developed their youth research and advocacy program which supported 94 students to publish research articles in Tetun and English. This program aimed to enhance youth digital literacy capacity. It did so both by upskilling students to research, write and edit these articles, but by building a platform which the broader youth community could access and therefore develop their literacy skills. YLDP published 8 articles in 2022, three of which have been translated into English, along with two video talk shows.

- **Youth-focused Feature Articles:** *Economic Development: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth in Timor-Leste; Harassment of Women and Children: Challenges to Their Freedom and Independence; and Conflict in Dili: Risk and Threat for Youths.*
- **708 Website visitors. 61% aged 18-35.**



The YLDP team meet with high school students to discuss the opportunities and challenges that new technologies, especially social media, present for young people in Timor-Leste.

"The program promotes digital literacy as well as research analysis skills for young people in Dili. It will continue to gain the interest of more young people in the field of research, to enhance capacities and human resources for future generations in this young nation."  
- YLDP

**Manggala Jingga in Indonesia.** Manggala Jingga are a student-led advocacy group that help community members in the Kampung Air province develop social enterprises to tackle environmental and economic problems.

In 2022, they consulted young people in the community to determine that waste mismanagement was one of the most prominent issues they faced. They then helped establish an urban farming social enterprise, as well as a waste bank management program in response.

Manggala Jingga also run workshops for local women on entrepreneurship skills, and are currently in the process of developing a homemade tempeh social enterprise. And last but not least, Manggala Jingga also trains volunteers to teach primary school in rural areas, where accessing traditional school is difficult for most families.

"We see Manggala Jingga as an organisation that can spread real benefits and impacts for the community of Kampung Air... so that they can become an empowered community with good self-determination ability."



The Manggala Jingga team meet with Rainy, our Chief International Partnerships Officer



The team set up Kelas Jingga ("Orange Classroom"), their program which trains volunteers to teach primary school children in Kampung Air.



At an Impact Circle workshop, young participants learn and apply the principles of Human Centred Design to local challenges.



Impact Circle workshop participants experiment with innovative ways to catch mosquitoes.

**Alumni for Soft-Skills Development (ASD) in Cambodia.** ASD are a youth-led organisation focused on developing critical thinking skills among young Cambodians so that they can tackle sustainable development challenges in their own communities.

In 2022, they visited rural communities and facilitated Impact Circles to better understand local concerns. They used a Human Centred Design approach to respond to the issues that emerged. As a result, ASD campaigned for environmental policies to tackle the erosion of riverbanks, waste, and unsafe roads. They also promoted local composting practices and established a waste bank management system.

We are incredibly proud of the OYSF, not just in terms of the multi-dimensional and empowering international impact that it has allowed us to lead, but because it has enabled us to, as Ashley Wild explains, "pivot the whole development paradigm to be less about ourselves and more about giving our partners the platform to lead change in the way that only they can".

"We use our Human Centred Design approach which involves engaging with villagers to learn about issues and their own village context. All this information helps us to be inspired by the solutions and innovations as well." -ASD Facebook



# TRANSFERABLE AND UNIVERSAL SKILLS:

## More than just a line on your resume

“It’s really important for the sector to start engaging young people. Oaktree is a huge source of potential for the sector, and we need to take notice of that!”  
- Emma Clampett

“The best professional training I ever received for my current job - I got that at Oaktree.”  
- Peter Willis

It’s not hard to see how Oaktree trains young people with the practical skills that they need to lead impactful careers in the development sector.

Suhail shares, “I think volunteering is very important because it is a soft-landing into a role that you may want to do professionally down the line. Volunteering at Oaktree provides you with a safe environment with mentorship, guidance and support, which allows you to develop professionally and prepares you for the future”.

Elyse adds, “when I first started looking for a formal position at Oaktree, I looked at the different roles available and thought, ‘Oh I could probably step into an administrative role’. I didn’t think of myself as a leader. But Oaktree has such an inclusive and collaborative approach to leadership. So I felt extremely supported in growing my confidence over time, and I eventually moved up into a leadership role! And I loved it.”

Oaktree’s volunteer empowerment model is designed around maximising youth employability in today’s world. As Bardie shares, “when we talk about transferable skills in the 21st century, we refer to 4 Cs: creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. Oaktree epitomises the development of all four of these”.

Volunteers develop these skills in every role at Oaktree, from accounting to social media. As young people navigating a complex sector, we need to be collaborative and creative about our approach to development, we think critically to continually decolonise this approach, and the way we communicate all of this is paramount.

### Transferable Skills in the 21st Century:

## The 4 Cs

- 1. CREATIVITY
- 2. COLLABORATION
- 3. CRITICAL THINKING
- 4. COMMUNICATION



For Bardie, “international development can be shrouded in a cloud of mystery, but these four skills will help you in any job that you have. Oaktree is about will over skill - it takes you on based on your passion and helps you develop skills in different areas that you are interested in. This means that you can explore different career pathways without being locked in one space, which is what happens when you go straight into a paid role. Oaktree supports you to become a generalist who can take those 4 Cs and tackle anything you want out there in the world.”

The upskilling that Oaktree provides doesn’t just allow our volunteers to grow into their roles at Oaktree, but to take those skills with them as they progress in their careers. Nick Allardice shares, “I’m now the CEO of Change.org, a massive platform for people to campaign on issues they care about. We have a platform of 80 million monthly users, and it has taken me years to get here. But everything I do is the same as what I did at Oaktree, just on a larger scale! Oaktree set me up to do what I do now”.

Kaisha tells a similar story: “Back In 2015, I went to Timor-Leste to complete an evaluation for the High Schools Transformation Project. During this trip, I fell in love with the idea of evaluation and how it can make a difference. That’s now what I do for a living! I work in evaluation in the international development space, and I always think back to my time at Oaktree, and what a valuable learning experience it was, which directly led me to where I am today.”

Oaktree doesn’t just provide its volunteers with development-specific skills, but also skills that are crucial to employment in any sector. Lani Cutuli says that Oaktree taught her “what to do when you feel out of your depth, which is as simple as knowing how to find people or information or resources that can help you”.

Emily Chugg says Oaktree helped to teach her that “leadership is not a position, it’s an activity.” Jahin says

### Alumni Impact Survey (Responses)



**86%**  
of volunteers agree that Oaktree has **strongly influenced their career trajectories.**

**71%**  
of volunteers **developed technical skills** during their time at Oaktree which are “vital” to their current area of work.

Former volunteers report that their time at Oaktree helped them **improve the contacts and connections** they developed in their field of interest increased by

**46%**

Former volunteers report that after their time at Oaktree, their **confidence in securing employment in their desired field** increased by

**36%**

Oaktree taught him how to “get out of [his] comfort zone”, sharing that he “used to be quiet and shy, but when you have crucial responsibilities - like calling up schools to ask them to join Live Below the Line - you have to overcome your nerves. And the confidence that this gives you is incredible.”





## Alumni Responses:

### “What are the skills that you developed at Oaktree?”

- Impact-orientation
- Scrappiness
- Ambition
- Body/mind determination
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Workplace Management
- Risk Management
- Public Speaking
- Organisation
- Campaign Writing
- Project Management
- Strategy-development
- Budget-management
- Volunteer-management
- Conflict-resolution
- Campaign-management
- Empowerment & agency
- Confidence
- Evaluation
- Facilitation & Conversation
- Remote-working
- Self-management
- Time-management

And most importantly, Oaktree teaches young people a skill that is relevant beyond any job: how to navigate and resolve conflicts.

Jahin shares, “I worked in a diverse team - not a single one of us came from the same place. We learnt conflict resolution because we had to, and that helped us develop even better ideas.”

Nick Allardice adds, “The conflict I experienced between national and state offices while I was at Oaktree is exactly the same as the conflicts I navigate between global and national offices in my current organisation, Change.org. The most important thing to realise is that in these contexts where everyone is passionate about changing things for the better, conflict arises because people care. And that makes it much easier to navigate”.

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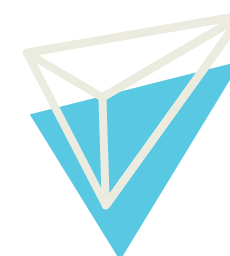
## MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT: Making a difference isn't a cliché

“In high school I had only learnt about conventional careers - like lawyers and engineers. But Oaktree expanded my mind to the possibility of creating change.

It also opened my eyes to all the different ways that you can contribute to democracy.”

- Yasmin Poole

.....



“At uni, we all work casual jobs to pay the bills, but those jobs don't give us a “why”. Oaktree helps you understand the “why” by helping you find a purpose.

You realise that you can have a positive impact with the work you do, and that is amazing.”

- Jahin Tanvir

Oaktree doesn't just impact our volunteers through the skills we help them develop, but also through the opportunities we create for them to have a real impact.

Lloyd shares, “I always experienced volunteering as something I got more out of than I could ever put in. I moved interstate and left full-time employment to join Oaktree because I thought it would be a role that would push me to develop new skills, and also allow me to influence positive change. And I was right. The professional development I received at Oaktree was incredible”.

For Nic Mackay, “Oaktree changed the way I saw the world, and gave me a far greater global perspective, reinforcing my beliefs about the importance of justice and the role young people can play”. Oaktree also helps young people expand their understanding of the world, and creates a constructive space in which they can make mistakes, learn, and grow.

Kaisha shares that she “grew up in a predominantly privileged suburban bubble, and then went to university and remained in that bubble”. She adds, “It wasn't till I got to Oaktree that I found my people, who were not only like-minded but who also challenged my perceptions of how the world worked. I would walk away from every day in the office, feeling so inspired to be part of something bigger than myself, and that changed my life.”

For most young people, the idea of changing the world has become a cliché, not because they don't care, but because they don't see how they can actually effect change. As we continue to gain unprecedented access to the neverending and complex issues our world faces, younger generations are increasingly characterised by cynicism and a sense of hopelessness. **And this is where Oaktree comes in: showing young people that change is possible, and supporting them to lead it.**

Yasmin resonates deeply with this. She shares, “before Oaktree I was working in retail, but I wanted something more. And that became Oaktree - the one place in my life where I could find meaning. Oaktree unlocked excitement and opportunity in me that I just didn't have before. I realised what was possible. I felt like my world opened, even in my own confidence, and it all happened from there. I feel really lucky”. And for many of us, this extends to beyond our time at Oaktree. Jayme shares: “Oaktree gave me a purpose during university and kept me on track to follow my passions. Everyone around me were always such cheerleaders who made sure that I stuck to my guns even after Oaktree, and kept pursuing a career through which I could help change the world.”



This shared belief in building a better world is what has allowed us to have such a substantial impact. And if we want to talk about young people making a difference, well, we helped transform the Cambodian education system!

From 2012-2015 Oaktree partnered with a community-based Cambodian organisation called KAPE (Kampuchean Action for Primary Education) and co-developed the **Beacon Schools Initiative**. This initiative aimed to implement educational development models that promote the emergence of a new generation of public school in Cambodia, one which exemplified good governance, professionalism and quality education.

The initiative operated across 3 secondary schools, engaged 1739 students, and created a scholarship program for teachers to pursue further education part-time. It also featured the innovative implementation of smartphones and tablets to encourage interactive learning.

Witnessing the success of the Beacon Schools Initiative program, the government introduced a similar program called the New Generation schools (NGs).

**In 2016, the Ministry of Education passed an NGs education policy, based on Oaktree & KAPE'S model. This has since transformed the school curriculum across Cambodia.**

So yes, when we know that working towards and building a better future is actually possible, making a difference doesn't seem so cliché anymore. And Oaktree helps us realise that to do this, we have to work together. Our culture is built around bringing passionate young people together.

As Duncan shares, "people come to Oaktree to do good in the world, but also to meet like-minded people. It's notable how many people have become really good friends and stayed connected with their Oaktree peers for the rest of their lives. We would all recommend the Oaktree experience".

For Kareem, "at Oaktree, I had the wonderful experience of being surrounded by people not there because of a paycheck or title, but because they believed in what we were doing".

Jahin adds, "at our team meetings, everyone was always on time, and it was so obvious that everyone wanted to be there. And the crazy thing is - we were volunteers, we were doing that for free! Every workplace culture should work towards that".

Elyse adds, "so many of the people I worked with at Oaktree are now some of my best friends, 10 years later. And we continue to explore the ideas and challenges we

discussed at Oaktree, even as our careers have led us to different countries and roles. Oaktree is so awesome because it connects you with people who get you and your values, and who continue to play a significant role in the rest of your life".

And Ashley shares that "Oaktree taught [him] what welcoming looks like, how to break down our subconscious biases and enable equal participation for everyone". For Ashley, "Oaktree is an absolute leader in diversity and inclusion. The sense of welcome and peace I felt at Oaktree, how exciting it was, how much I wanted to go into the office, and how much I enjoyed chatting with other people - these things will always stay with me".

Volunteering at Oaktree is a life-changing experience. As Jayme shares, "I would highly recommend volunteering in some capacity to all volunteers, because it just sets you up for life. When I got out into the workforce and sat through interviews asking about my experience, thanks to Oaktree, I actually did have 5 years of experience, and that felt so great".

For Peter, "Oaktree has an incredible track record of supporting young people to develop in all facets of their lives. It changed my life, and I would love for other young people to have the same experience." We look forward to the coming generations of incredible volunteers who will lead Oaktree into the future.

And our work is far from done. As Ashley shares, "We continually need to broaden Australian public awareness of the injustice that exists both outside and within our country. We need to acknowledge our privilege and work hard to pass that on. Oaktree does this by rejecting the poverty porn model of fixating on how hard people's lives can be, and instead exposes the world to their capabilities".

In the next twenty years, we hope to continue and grow this approach, and celebrate and leverage the capabilities of young people around the region to lead, demand and create change, and ultimately build a more just and sustainable world.





## Conclusion

### LOOKING FORWARD:

#### A message from Co-CEOs Zahra Al-Hilaly & Lucie Tolhoek

Just like the organisation's name, young leaders are seeds, who perpetually grow branches, just like our stories, intersecting our connections of kindness and love.

As the newest Co-CEOs of Oaktree Australia, we are excited to transform what 'youth leadership' looks like, reminding our community that change is contingent upon the participation and nourishment of every young person to be afforded the platform to amplify their voices. We are incredibly honoured and excited to take forward Oaktree's mission, acknowledging it is imperative that youth voices are continually provided with a seat at the table and in decision-making forums.

There is always room to grow, and just like our name, we are excited to grow our branches, to be a home for youth power in the communities we reach across the country.

Oaktree has served as a safe space for leaders to find their community, and looking forward, our vision is to expand our community, to recognise the power of intersectionality and belonging within our mission. We are excited to broaden Oaktree's scope to find power in emphasising our voices through creativity and collaboration. There is always room to grow, and just like our name, we are excited to grow our branches, to be a home for youth power in the communities we reach across the country. This is why our Youth Solidarity Fund model is so important, because it symbolises the importance of young people in our movement to create a more just world.

When we first started as Co-CEOs, Thenu our predecessor reminded us both of how excited she was for the both of us to outdo her legacy, but we have quickly realised that the Oaktree team and the youth we work with, are all recollections of communal strength and solidarity. In the simple South African proverb, "I am because we are" - Ubuntu.



We've  
**accomplished**  
**a lot** over the  
last 20 years,  
**but we're not**  
**done yet.**

**Help us** make the  
next 20 years  
of Oaktree **even**  
**more impactful.**



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