



oaktree

Annual Report 2021



Oaktree recognises and respects the traditional owners of all the lands on which we operate. We pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past, present and future. Sovereignty was never ceded.



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INTRODUCTION



WHO ARE WE?

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Oaktree is a youth-run international development agency. We believe that every young person should have an equitable chance to reach their potential, no matter where they are born. We exist to empower young people across the Asia-Pacific Region to become agents of change and lead sustainable development in their communities.

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VISION

We envision a just and sustainable world, where every young person has an equitable chance to reach their potential.

A just and sustainable world is one where everyone has a voice, your circumstances don't predetermine your future, and instead of barriers, you're faced with endless opportunities. It's a world in which young people, in all our diversity, have access to the tools and opportunities we need to grow and thrive.



PURPOSE

Oaktree is a youth-led movement, supporting young people to shape a better world.

Oaktree exists to empower young people to become agents of change. Across the Asia-Pacific, young people have very different experiences and challenges. We recognise that we are the experts in our own lives and communities. So here's the deal: we don't set the agenda alone. We share our skills and build the capabilities of young people across our region to lead, demand and create solutions to address these challenges themselves. We also acknowledge the power of existing as a youth-led organisation, providing opportunities for young leaders in Australia to grow their skills and learn from other youth-led initiatives in the region.

OUR PRIORITY AREAS

Youth Empowerment & Leadership.

All young people deserve the opportunity to develop their skills, increase their confidence and build their capacity to lead. At Oaktree we do this both through our international programming, and through our youth-led organisational model here in Australia, and we will continue to support initiatives that have youth leadership at their core.

Education.

Oaktree has had a focus on education and its role in breaking the poverty cycle, empowering young people and creating change since our very beginnings in 2003. While our programmatic work may have shifted away from traditional models, our commitment to supporting young people to access informal and formal education has not wavered!

Civic Participation.

Barriers to young people participating in formal decision making, civic and political participation and representation are still very apparent across the Asia Pacific. Our programs aim to increase the ability of young people to actively participate in civil society, in leadership roles and otherwise.

Equity and Justice.

Oaktree will continue to support and partner with organisations that have a focus on alleviating issues of injustice and inequity, with a focus on issues of racial, economic and gender-based discrimination.

VALUES



Inclusive

Everyone is welcome at Oaktree – regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, political or socio-economic background. We celebrate diversity in all its forms and acknowledge the complexity and intersectionality of the work that we do. We are warm, welcoming and respectful – we want everyone who engages with us to feel a part of our community.

Collaborative

We know that we don't have all the answers, that's why we value the knowledge and experiences of our partners, peers and friends. We know that when we work together, our impact is greatest. Learning from one another is the best route to implementing long-lasting, sustainable change.

Ambitious

We are bold and relentless. We think big in our impact. We aren't afraid to challenge the status quo and do things differently. Some may call us idealistic, but changing the world requires just that – big goals and lots of confidence.

Sustainable

To us, being 'sustainable' is not just about remembering your water bottle. It means prioritising long-term impact in our international and domestic work. It also means maintaining supportive structures and wellbeing. Change won't happen overnight and we want to make sure we are in it for the long run.

Hungry to Learn

We're endlessly curious and constantly learning. Every day is a new opportunity to challenge our thinking and evolve our work. We're always on the lookout for new ways to maximise our impact, amplify our voices and advocate for social change.



A stylized map of Southeast Asia and Oceania. Landmasses are represented by dark grey silhouettes, and the surrounding water is a light beige color. Numerous small black dots are scattered across the water areas, likely representing islands or reefs. Three purple rectangular labels with white text are overlaid on the map: 'Cambodia' in the upper left, 'Timor Leste' in the center right, and 'Australia' in the lower left. An orange location pin icon is also present in the lower left area.

Cambodia

Timor Leste

Australia





Board Address

Alan Wu (Incoming Chair) &
Finbar Piper (Deputy Chair)



Board Chair and Deputy Chair Address

This year, Oaktree reached a milestone: our 18th birthday! Today, we proudly stand as the result of 18 years of young people working together to eradicate the injustice of poverty and inequality.

And yet, Oaktree's mission remains more relevant than ever. Despite young people offering new vision for a shared future, radically inclusive and connected ways of working together, and a commitment to community, they are too often marginalised in public decision-making. And so they continue to bear some of the worst effects of the multiple crises of our time, whether relating to social and economic inequalities, climate change, or democracy.

As the challenges we face change, so too should our strategies to meet them. Led by a new executive team, Oaktree has rethought the way we make impact. The successful trial of the Youth Solidarity Fund this year, the result of hard work and new thinking by the many young people who make up Oaktree, is a potent reminder of the change young people can effect on the frontlines of our progress. We look forward to its expansion.

This will mark the end of some important chapters for Oaktree. With the new impact model has come the need to wind down long-standing partnerships with Ba Futuru and KAPE. While this will change our relationship, Ba Futuru and KAPE will remain a core part of our story, and we look forward to finding new ways of collaborating in years to come.

This year, the Board has also worked to consolidate the way we work, to provide greater support to and independence for our executive team. We welcomed new expertise and insight, and sought to better share and develop existing knowledge and skills. And we farewelled Board leaders Heidi and Ronald, who stewarded the Board and our organisation through the pandemic and a period of significant internal change. We're incredibly grateful for their tireless contributions and leadership, as we are of all of our volunteers who continue to inspire us on our journey ahead.

Oaktree may now be 18 - but we'll forever be young at heart! Thank you for contributing to our story so far; I cannot wait for you to see what's yet to come.



CEO Address

When I joined Oaktree in January 2021, we were looking forward to a 'post-covid' world. Of course, with the emergence of new variants, the COVID-19 pandemic was far from over. Yet, throughout this year, Oaktree has proven once again that a small group of passionate young people can continue to adapt and have a significant impact on local, national and global communities - despite external pressures.

In 2021, we saw our main partner in Timor Leste, Ba Futuru, successfully pivot from in-person workshops and support young change makers through online video making activities. We also saw our partner KAPE adapt to the online setting for their youth upskilling workshops in Cambodia. Back home, despite half the country being in lockdown, we brought together 180 people from across Australia, including former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to discuss how young people can contribute to and lead the COVID-19 recovery.

The core to this success can be seen through the actions and mindset of our new generation of volunteers. We are a generation that has taken the challenges presented to us and turned them into opportunities. For example, the pandemic has allowed us to rethink our approach to development. It has allowed us to fast-track localisation efforts, setting our programs up to be truly led by the young people in global south communities. In doing so, we are introducing an entirely new development model, one that puts the power solely in the hands of young changemakers in our region. This new development model, which centres on creating a network of youth-run movements and organisations through our Youth Solidarity Fund, is purpose built to thrive in our 'new normal'. It will not only increase our yearly impact but foster long-term sustainable development.

But before we go on to the next adventure, it is important to celebrate all that was achieved in 2021. This year of impact would not be possible without our incredible supporters. Specifically, thank you to the Arnold Foundation, Grace Foundation, Foundation for Young Australians and VicHealth for believing in us.

Similarly, a huge thank you to each everyday Australian who chose to support our vision by donating time and funds to our organisation in 2021. Without you, our ideas could not be transformed into real, lasting change.

Finally, thank you to our game-changing staff members, partners and volunteers. It is their hard work, dedication and drive to create a better world that will make you smile as you turn the page.



Thenu Herath, CEO

Impact

Impact

Our work across the
Asia-Pacific

Impact

Partnership Model & Development Philosophy

Oaktree believes in the power of young people to create social change. We invest in organisations which share our vision and who work to empower young people to innovate and drive the changes they wish to see at a local, national and global level.

Working in partnership with local organisations in the Asia-Pacific Region, Oaktree prioritises locally-led development for sustainable change. Our approach to development challenges the traditional donor-beneficiary model by centralising young people's expertise, experiences and innovation in our partnerships.

Our partnerships are built on the following principles:

- Partner-led
- Justice
- Trust
- Adaptability
- Long-term impact
- Resilience

With these principles informing our approach, we are able to collaboratively build a movement with our local partners that drives long-term change for a more just and sustainable world.

Our development philosophy is guided by these 3 principles:

Solidarity • Collaboration • Decolonisation

Timor: FoLiHa

Timor-Leste, like many other countries in the Global South, is experiencing a significant 'youth bulge', with 75% of the population under 25. This makes engaging with young people through youth-targeted programming crucial.

Our Partner: Ba Futuru

Oaktree has partnered with Ba Futuru since 2012. Ba Futuru has expertise in peace building, gender empowerment, child protection education, teaching approaches, and conflict transformation. Ba Futuru staff are renowned for their training and facilitation skills, providing a variety of workshops and training. They have provided education programs to more than 30,000 young people, teachers, and community leaders since 2004.



OUR PROJECT:

Foin-Sae Lidera Hamutuk

Foin-sa'e Lidera Hamutuk (FoLiHa), Tetum for 'Youth Leading Together', places young people and youth empowerment at the forefront. In 2021, FoLiHa entered its second and final year, working with 50 young people from the Manufahi and Lautem municipalities.

Building on year 1, year 2 focused on civic journalism, theatre skills and participatory video-making. The program culminated in a community event where changemakers demonstrated their skills and ability to advocate for positive change within their community through their videos and theatre performances. The program included the employment of a youth co-facilitator to increase support for the program and make sure youth voice was at the centre of the project. The changemakers were able to learn these skills through interactive workshops and mentoring throughout the program, facilitated by Maun Ivo and expert guests such as Ba Futuru's theatre team.



The youth changemakers learned how to peacefully and critically use their voice through a variety of different platforms and build their grassroots activism skills. Youth gained confidence in public speaking, learned how to better understand their emotions, and how to better communicate community issues after participating in community assessments.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, in-person activities were temporarily suspended. Ba Futuru successfully pivoted and supported the young changemakers through online video making activities in response to the COVID situation. Nevertheless, the program was successfully completed in Manufahi with the Ba Futuru team scheduled to complete workshops in Lautem with the final community event expected in February 2022.

“

I have made a tremendous change in myself, now I can meet with community leaders, I have the ability to organize and make coordination to realize a program.

- Romancia Magno Gonçalves - 24

”

FoLiHa Achievements

The Changemakers in the FoLiHa program held a community event in Manufahi which was a very exciting chance where they showcased their participatory videos and theatre performances to their communities. The community participants were moved by the Changemakers' expression of youth issues, in which they were asked to perform more community events to a wider audience! The support from this community event resulted in youths to grow confidently, the development of advocacy skills and empowered young leaders to make a positive change. The quality of their videos showed they had developed quickly in theatre and demonstrated the impact that Timorese youth can have in their community combining a passionate cause they care about with their well written and presented presentations.

Oaktree was fortunate to have Maun Ivo speak at both our 'Young people and the COVID 19 recovery' event and Oaktree's workshop at the ACFID conference to speak about horizontal partnerships in youth development programming. Maun Ivo has learned new things from other experts on the three topics as well as on budgets, admin and finance can be challenging as he isn't yet as confident in those areas, but he's enjoying the experience and learning process. He has learned new things from other experts through Theatre Skills and Civic Journalism content writing. Ivo has excelled at facilitating so much so that Deputy CEO Mana Dith promoted him to facilitator.

Key Statistics

- 16 Youth Changemakers in Manufahi successfully completed FoLiHa Year 2
- Changemakers held a community event with an audience of 60 people
- 20 Youth Changemakers in Lautem have been selected to participate in FoLiHa Year 2



Policy and Advocacy

The Policy & Advocacy team had a huge 2021 with a number of goals being met. The team started the year with a parliamentary submission on funding for public research into foreign policy issues to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's Inquiry. The submission allowed the team to demonstrate Oaktree's consultative abilities at the national level. The suggestion for the inquiry was to improve foreign policy so it can be more representative and therefore, sustainable by including more diverse perspectives. This can be achieved by collaborating with key groups, including young people in the development and implementation of foreign policy.



Throughout the year we have been putting our advocacy and engagement strategy into practice as we kicked off our MP meetings in April with the Labor Representative for Bruce, Julian Hill. May also saw another MP meeting with Peter Khalil the Labor member for Wills. Both meetings allowed us to further strengthen our pre-existing relationships with the MP's alongside, discussing the impact that COVID-19 continues to have on young people in our region and what Labor can do to alleviate this.

August became a busy time as the original plan for an in-person advocacy trip to Canberra was prevented due to COVID-19. Instead, MP meetings were moved online as the team met with Victorian Greens Senator Janet Rice, Liberal Senator for South Australia Senator David Fawcett and the Hon. Luke Howarth, Assistant Minister for Youth and Employment Services and the Liberal National Party's representative for Petrie. All meetings were invaluable as we discussed Oaktree's work and the need to prioritise young people in Australia's aid program.

We ended the year with the launch of the Youth Participation in Development: A Practical Guide (APG). This guide, put together by the 2020 Policy & Advocacy team, acts as a companion piece to Oaktree's 2016 Practice Note, 'Youth Participation in Development'. Its purpose is to provide actionable advice on how to increase youth participation and mainstream youth issues within development work. The APG has been a year in the making with support from all across Oaktree. The APG is available on Oaktree's website.

Key Achievements and Wins

6 MP Meetings

1 Parliamentary Submission

1 Publication

→ Keynote address at the Research for Development Impact Network's Student Forum 'Youth Leadership in Aid & Development'

→ Oaktree led the following ACFID Conference Sessions:

- **F* UP Night**
- **Towards Horizontal Programming:** insights from youth leaders in Timor-Leste with practical take-aways (with YLDP, BMTL & Ba Futuru)



Our MP meetings have not only allowed us to establish and strengthen key relationships, but they have led the team to some huge wins! Following the meeting with Senator Janet Rice, the Senator then mentioned the team and the meeting in her online address to parliament on the 5th of August. Senator Rice not only amplified our point regarding the heavy impact the pandemic has had on young people, but also urged the government to take responsibility by pushing the solutions our team proposed such as: the foreign aid budget and increasing COVAX in order to better support young people in the region.

Meeting with Senator David Fawcett also led to a major win as the Senator passed the team along to an advisor of Zed Seselja, the Minister for International Development and the Pacific. The meeting was extremely productive as the advisor acknowledged that there was an opportunity to bring a greater youth focus into the aid program, leading to our policy asks being passed to senior advisers.



KYLA

Cambodia has one of the most youthful populations in Southeast Asia. The median age within the country is 25.3 years, with approximately 65% of the population being below 30 years of age (Source: World Population Review). Despite this, there is and under-investment in this large group of the Cambodian population. Only a third of the young people enrol in secondary education and an even smaller fraction of this number enrol in tertiary education (Source: KAPE).

KYLA - KAPE

Overview

Kampuchean Action to Promote Education (KAPE) was founded in 1999 with a focus on promoting the development of primary education. Since then, the agency has grown steadily into the largest local NGO working in the formal education sector in Cambodia. The organisation is well-regarded for its innovation as well as high management capacity and is the only NGO to ever receive direct funding from the Cambodian government.

KYLA is a group of dedicated young people who are alumni of KAPE's program who aspire to give back to their community. The KYLA secretariat, which is supported by KAPE, work together to deliver advocacy and outreach services to young people still studying in secondary school. Now in its third year of programming, KYLA hopes to continue to develop this program to further opportunities of Cambodian youth through networking, scholarship support, knowledge and experience sharing, career counselling, and furthering the voices of young people in multiple institutions. KYLA's main goal is to increase the opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential by empowering youth-led groups to share their knowledge and advocate for the benefit of young people.

Key Achievements

COVID-19 was rampant throughout Cambodia from April to September of 2021. Nonetheless, the KYLA team was able to pivot their activities and shift onto the online space quite seamlessly.

Capacity-building workshops

In 2021, capacity-building workshops will continue to be the main activities that KYLA will conduct for their high school beneficiaries. The purpose of these workshops are to fill in the gaps that the education curriculum does not address and broaden students' skill sets to prepare them for the workforce and life more broadly. These workshops include skills on:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Personal budgeting
- Public speaking
- Advocacy



Remote youth-led evaluation

The Oaktree team is also in the process of conducting a case study on remote youth-led evaluation. This will look at the effectiveness of the evaluation that the KYLA secretariat conducted on the Year 2 activities in 2020.

Youth Solidarity Fund

In 2019, Oaktree met with local youth-led organisations in Timor-Leste to better understand how Oaktree could best support their work. It was found that most local youth-led organisations are not formally registered NGOs and the process of registration is time-intensive, overly bureaucratic and expensive.

This meant many are ineligible to receive official development assistance through DFAT's programs and partners. These youth-led organisations expressed that small and flexible funding amounts to cover shorter-term activities (e.g 1 year) would be the best support.

In response, Oaktree developed the Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund (OYSF).

The OYSF aims to:

- Increase the capacity of youth-led organisations, groups and grassroots movements to create a more just and sustainable world.
- Enable greater access to short-term flexible funding up to US\$15,000pa and support for youth-led organisations, groups and grassroots movements to grow their impact.
- Give young people the ability to lead and participate in decision-making processes.



For the pilot year of the Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund, Oaktree partnered with Timor-Leste based Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP). YLDP is a small youth-led organisation, established in 2017 with a clear vision that is:

“ Truthfully motivating, engaging, empowering and encouraging young Timorese to be able to think globally and act locally’. The purpose of the organisation is to ‘Provide a positive learning space and offer leadership training in all areas, especially capacity-building, personal development and youth debate’.”



Despite facing significant barriers to programming in 2021, including COVID-19 related school closures and flooding from Tropical Cyclone Seroja, YLDP delivered a series of transformative leadership workshops to approximately 275 high school students, across six public high schools in March 2022.

The Youth Solidarity Fund provided US\$5,000 for YLDP to deliver the School Leadership Program. Total expenditure for program delivery was US\$3,485. School representatives who participated in the reflective interview sessions agreed that the school leadership program contributed to their ‘self-awareness on how to invest in their personal skills, how to discover their potential, and how to improve their capacity and self-empowerment’.

Community

Community Engagement

Engagemen
t

live below the line

Live Below the Line: An Oaktree Initiative is Oaktree's flagship peer-to-peer fundraising and awareness campaign, operating in its 11th consecutive year in 2021. Live Below the Line took place from Friday 28 April to Friday 26 May 2021, with its challenge-week occurring over Monday 24 to Friday 26 May.

Live Below the Line raised \$130,116 for Oaktree's operational and impact work, with 630 sign-ups and an average donation of \$55.

The 2021 campaign was a considered, concerted effort to set up Live Below the Line for the future. By moving away from outdated campaign techniques, and investing heavily into building LBL's digital presence, with a new website, digital marketing of the campaign and in our engagement with participants and donors, we come out of 2021 LBL better informed about impactful decisions, levers and opportunities for future Oaktree peer-to-peer fundraisers.

We are incredibly grateful to our Live Below the Line supporters who continue to challenge themselves each year to craft a better world. In 2022, we aim to reimagine Live Below the Line as a platform for understanding the holistic experience of systemic disadvantage and will be incorporating more than one line, with more than one challenge — you decide where you draw the line.





REGULAR GIVING

A huge thank you to our donors who go above and beyond by providing regular and ongoing support to Oaktree. Our regular givers provide us with the ability to continue doing our work and championing for a more just and sustainable world. Thank you!





In 2021, Oaktree celebrated its 18th Birthday celebrating its past and current community, whilst setting its sights on the future with the launch of its 2022 to 2024 Strategic Plan.

The night was held at the newly built Victorian Pride Centre with catering provided from mission-driven organisations CoGround and the Asylum Seekers' Resource Centre.

Oaktree's co-founder Nic Mackay shared, "Oaktree helped other young people see the power of young people, and set up countless organisations... There is a reason why Oaktree is still here 18 years later, and that's because there's more work to be done!"

CELEBRATING 18 YEARS OF OAKTREE!

Thank

Thank You

It is not enough,
but it's a start

You



Now for the most important part of the report, our very long list of thank yous!

To kick us off, we must acknowledge the undeniable backbone to our family, the work of our volunteers. Every single person who has walked through the doors of Oaktree will always belong to something special and we thank you for choosing to dedicate your time to us and creating a more just world.

THANK YOU

Oaktree family - [volunteers](#)

Aafsha Yadav	Imogen Hoffenberg	Michael Gibson
Aletana Ajulo	Isaac Hockey	Michaela Jansens
Alice Huang	Isabella Coleman	Molly McDonald
Alyssa Leong	Isabella Thomas	Monique Tarrant
Amy Yu	Isha Tembe	Monique Tarrant
Andrew Wang	Izzy Burns	Mutsumi Shinke
Anna McFadyen	Jack Smith	Natalie Fenwick
Arielle Blokker	James Catterson	Nhi Lam
Ashley Wild	Janine Farah	Nicholas Toumbourou
Ava Rego	Jenny Tran	Nilma Leelarathne
Ayeesha Puvedran	Jessie Tang	Nithigna Kanchanakuntla
Beatrice de la Fuente	Joanna Guelas	Olivia Engelhard
Begona Lee	Joie Shu	Orlando Buttie
Belinda Thompson	Juan Nieto	Oshadha Iddawela
Bethany Cherry	Julia Hu	Rachel Cook
Bethany Shegog	Kannica Tan	Radhika Peddibhotla
Briana Jones	Kirsten Cavalida	Rainy Zafira
Camille Luchs	Lachlan Melsom	Raveen Gamage
Campbell Ferguson	Lani Cutuli	Rosie Bourke
Camryn Dudley	Lara Luitingh	Rozanna Kelly-Gerreyn
Carly Behlau	Laura Coburn	Ru Hui Foong
Celine Lau	Lawrence Phillips	Rubina Singh
Charlene Chan	Linda Nguyen	Samantha Chew
Charlotte McKenna	Louise Blair-West	Sami Chiu
Claire Maher	Lucie Tolhoek	Samuel Bissett
Danielle Smallacombe	Lucinda Thomas-Keenan	Sebastian Honegger-Guzman
Darren Chen	Luiza Dorfman Knijnik	Sian Kavanagh
Dave Rubite	Luke Simonelli	Silvana Tomaselli
Eleanor Hewitt	Lumi Tran	Simone McKenna
Elektra Hart	Madeleine Davies	Tara Bretherton
Emily Chugg	Maisha Sawar	Tevisht Juwaheer
Genaya Bardsley	Matisse Cousins	Thy Douglas
Georgia Desailly	Matthew Brick	Tishya Desai
Grace Laird	Max Tanaka	Varsha Bubathi
Grace Schneider	Meaghan Ferguson	Weijia Shen
Hong Doan	Melita Rajkumar	Yihan Li

Oaktree family - Leadership & Major Supporters

The Executive Team

Thenu Herath (CEO)
Kergen Angel (Head of Community Engagement)
Nathan Linton (Head of Impact)
Will Kabira (Head of Finance and Technology)
Liam Jackson (Outgoing Head of Finance and Operations)
Rebecca Yandell (Outgoing Head of Community Engagement)
Kieu Gavin (Outgoing Head of International Engagement)
Shani Cain (Outgoing CEO)

Finance Subcommittee

Steve Mills (Chair)
James Pulton
Jack He
Joshua Ng
Natalie Murphy

Fundraising Advisory Committee

Marta Zajac (Chair)
Roxy Kavanagh
James Atkinson
Maggy Liu
Victoria Burns
Paul Bailey

Major Supporters

Foundation for Young Australians
The Grace Foundation
The Arnold Foundation
VicHealth

The Board

Heidi Michael (Chair)
Ronald Zhang (Deputy Chair)
Marta Zajac
Cameron McGowan
Steve Mills
Elyse McInerney
Jack He
Ari Siggins
Hayley Cull (Outgoing)
Alan Wu (Incoming Chair)
Finbar Piper (Incoming Deputy Chair)

Risk & Compliance Subcommittee

Cameron McGowan (Chair)
Finbar Piper
Raja Nouredine
Alison Low
Lova Jansson

Development & Policy Subcommittee

Elyse McInerney
Kate Horwood
Aidan Craney
Holly Fingland
Felix Maia
Kate Phillips

THANK YOU

And a huge thank you to all of our wonderful mentors that support our volunteers to kick goals!

Lastly, a very special thank you to Oaktree's past executive members and volunteers for their ongoing support over this year. It's a very unique and wonderful thing that young people continue to support other young people and we are truly thankful for your guidance and mentorship.