



# Sustainable Development Goals | Oaktree Submission

## Who is Oaktree?

Oaktree is a youth-run aid and development organisation and has a proud history of productive grassroots advocacy in Australia. Oaktree is basing this submission on fourteen years of experience in domestic and regional youth engagement, partnering with youth-led organisations and funding secondary education reform programs throughout the Asia-Pacific.

## Executive Summary:

The world today has the largest ever generation of young people with over 50 per cent of the global population under thirty. Global youth populations are currently concentrated in developing countries with over 85 per cent of all young people located in the Global South. The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee inquiry into the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals is an important opportunity to increase political awareness around the relationship between the Goals and the participation of young people in their implementation. Oaktree believes that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a sound foundation for the implementation of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), and can re-establish our commitment to the global development agenda. Oaktree's **primary recommendations** to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee are as follows:

**1. Domestic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should actively work to promote the 2030 Agenda across different constituencies.**

1.1 The Australian government should invest in publicly communicating the Sustainable Development Goals to young people.

1.2 The Australian government should specifically invest in fostering collaboration between different constituencies for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



1.3 The Australian government should leverage the Sustainable Development Goals as an opportunity to communicate the structural processes that shape Australia's international development work.

**2. Government structures and accountability mechanisms should work to provide an integrated assessment of Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in light of their impact on young people.**

2.1 The Australian government should establish an Independent Commissioner for Future Generations to assess Australia's progress against the 2030 deadline.

2.2 The Australian government should improve the transparency of expenditure directed towards youth programming in Australian international development.

2.3 The Australian government should increase investment in Overseas Development Assistance to reach 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030.

**3. Monitoring progress against the Sustainable Development Goals should involve building the capacity of civil society to effectively review Australia's performance.**


3.1 The Australian government should increase investment in improving age-related measurement capabilities to improve understanding of the unique experiences of young people living in poverty.

3.2 The Australian government should increase investment in age-sensitive data collection processes to improve domestic understanding of the ways young people are excluded from international development practice.

**Response to selected terms of reference:**

**b) the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDG;**

- Meaningfully engaging young Australians in the implementation of the SDGs will stabilise our international development intentions, projecting a more committed, consistent and long term approach to our international engagement. The SDGs are also a unique opportunity to engage young Australians with the structural processes which shape Australia's development efforts.

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- The SDGs provide a critical moment at which Australia can think more intentionally about the way it engages young people in its international development efforts, and the way it communicates this to the broader Australian public. Disseminating the core message of the SDG agenda in will allow the Australian public to re-engage with concepts of global responsibility and collective action, and realise Australia's role in advancing the global development agenda.
  - The SDGs can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practice across broad constituencies, fostering greater collaborative action between government and civic institutions. Doing so strengthens the fabric of Australia's international development efforts and projects a strong commitment to the SDG agenda.

**c) what governance structures and accountability measures are required at the national, state and local levels of government to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the SDG that is both meaningful and achieves real outcomes;**

- Oaktree advocates the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Future Generations to assess the progress of policies pertaining to the SDGs, with particular attention to the inclusion of cross-cutting issues such as youth engagement in Australia's SDG efforts. Over a third of the 169 SDG targets implicitly or explicitly reference the need for the participation and empowerment of young people in their implementation. The short term nature of electoral cycles impedes the ability to design and deliver long term policy priorities necessary to sustain the implementation of the SDGs to 2030. An Independent Commissioner for Future Generations should serve to resist this, reporting to the interdepartmental committee and publicly reporting its assessments.
- Clearer breakdowns of expenditure on aid programs that target young people as a proportion of the beneficiary population would allow better institutional and public understanding of how to maximise resource allocation towards youth programming.
- Oaktree supports ACFID's proposal for a national implementation plan for the SDGs which outlines how Australia will achieve the goals both nationally and through our ODA efforts. A national plan will coordinate political, civil and bureaucratic action on the SDGs and facilitate consistent progress towards the 2030 deadline.



- Increased expenditure on Australian ODA as a whole to reach 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030 will enable Australia's aid program to achieve the SDGs' primary purpose of eliminating poverty.

**d) how can performance against the SDG be monitored and communicated in a way that engages government, businesses and the public, and allows effective review of Australia's performance by civil society;**

- Monitoring Australia's performance against the SDGs relies on concentrated, accurate data. A scarcity of disaggregated data by sex, income and age in particular, impedes civil society's ability to review and evaluate Australia's global development efforts.
- Increased investment in improving age related measurement capabilities is critical if Australia is to strategically address the rapidly growing youth populations in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, within the SDG framework.
- Data collection processes which clearly outline the influence of age as a barrier to participatory development will enhance domestic and global understanding of the complex ways in which young people are excluded from the international development agenda. These collection mechanisms can help clarify the direction and intention of Australia's ODA, in a manner which is sensitive to the unique experiences of young people living in poverty.