

Executive Summary

The WESTPAC Scoping Workshop on Ocean Literacy

(Online, 9–10 October 2025)

1. Background

The IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) convened the first Scoping Workshop on Ocean Literacy on 9–10 October 2025, held online with the participation of members of its open-ended Intersessional Task Force (ITF) on Ocean Literacy.

The Intersessional Task Force was formed following the decision of the Fifteenth Intergovernmental Session (WESTPAC-XV, March 2025, Tokyo), with the mandate to advance the development of ocean literacy in the Western Pacific and its adjacent area. The ITF currently includes 20 nominated or recommended ocean literacy experts from 12 Member States in the region - China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, USA, and Vietnam. The list of current members is provided in **Annex I**.

The workshop aimed to: Introduce the ITF members; showcase ocean literacy efforts in the Member States, identify challenges and emerging opportunities, and foster collaboration to advance ocean literacy in the Western Pacific.



Group photo of the online Scoping Workshop on 9th October 2025

2. Overview of Presentations and Discussions

The two half-day online workshop featured expert presentations on ocean literacy, followed by plenary discussions on the way forward. The workshop agenda is provided in **Annex II**.

A total of 12 presentations were delivered, covering ocean literacy related policy, practices, and recommendations for future action. Key national updates are briefly summarized below.

- **Indonesia:** Ocean literacy is supported under the National Blue Economy Strategy, with national initiatives promoted at the ministerial level, particularly in education and culture. Bottom-up, community-based capacity-building initiatives, such as *Tsunami Ready*, were also highlighted.
- **Malaysia:** Ocean literacy is advanced through university-led education and youth programmes, such as the CEMACS Coral Camp, alongside public awareness efforts related to coastal governance, marine pollution, and relevant legal frameworks.
- **China:** Ocean literacy is promoted through national scientific literacy campaigns, marine-disaster early-warning communication, extensive public outreach via museums and education bases, and the Blue Citizen Initiative by the City of Xiamen, supported by APEC collaborations.
- **Thailand:** Ocean literacy is integrated into school curricula, science communication, and community programmes, supported by the collaboration among government agencies (e.g., the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources), universities, the National Science Museum, aquariums, and NGOs. The need for science communicators to build empathy and public understanding of the ocean was highlighted.
- **Sri Lanka:** Ocean literacy is linked to climate resilience and sustainable fisheries through community outreach, mangrove restoration, and Blue Economy messaging to improve public awareness and engagement.
- **Russia:** Ocean literacy is advanced through youth-focused initiatives, including the Floating University, science festivals, marine museums, and extensive outreach programs.
- **Japan:** Ocean education is promoted under the Fourth Basic Plan on Ocean Policy, with initiatives conducted by national agencies, research institutes, NPOs, and foundations (e.g., JAMSTEC, Sasakawa Peace Foundation). Good practices include the Ocean Education Pioneer School Programme, the development of supplementary textbooks by cities, and public awareness campaigns and exhibitions.
- **Philippines:** Ocean literacy initiatives lead by NGOs were introduced, including efforts to mobilize youth, teachers, and local communities through creative campaigns and digital platforms.

Overall, the presentations demonstrated that ocean literacy is gaining increasing recognition across the region, with growing engagement from governments, research institutions, educational organizations, and civil society groups. Approaches vary from formal education and policy integration to informal learning, community outreach, and science communication, reflecting diverse national contexts and capacities.

While many promising initiatives and good practices were shared, participants noted that progress remains uneven among Member States. Challenges and gaps continue to constrain the scaling-up of ocean literacy across the region. These include limited institutional coordination, fragmented efforts, sustainability of funding, and lack of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating impact

- **Uneven progress across the region:** Ocean literacy remains limited in reach and varies widely among Member States in terms of capacity, resources, and institutional support.

- **Lack of a dedicated policy framework:** While the importance of the Ocean Literacy is increasingly reflected in some national and international instruments and policy frameworks, no country currently has a standalone policies or strategies specifically focused on ocean literacy.
- **Fragmented and ad hoc practices:** Existing efforts remain isolated, short-term, or project based, often lacking a coherent and strategic approach that enables scale-up and long-term impact.
- **Limited local relevance of ocean literacy materials:** Ocean literacy materials are often not sufficiently adapted to local ecological condition, cultural context, and linguistic diversity. Generic materials frequently overlook local species, coastal traditional and indigenous knowledge.
- **Unsustainable financing and weak monitoring system:** Most initiatives rely on short-term or project-based funding, limiting continuity, scalability, and long-term impact. Monitoring and evaluation systems remain underdeveloped, with few robust indicators to assess behavioral change or educational outcomes.
- **Weak science communication capacity:** Inadequate science communication channels and a shortage of skilled science communicators hinder the translation of complex scientific knowledge into engaging messages for the general public.

Several strategic directions were proposed to advance ocean literacy in the region:

- **Leverage existing national policy frameworks:** Building on national ocean-related policies, blue economy strategies, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans to mainstream ocean literacy within existing national developments and sustainability agendas.
- **Enhance institutional support and regional coordination:** Developing an enabling institutional environment by, but not limited to, establishing regional networks, hubs, and dedicated mechanisms for coordination, knowledge exchange, and cross learning.
- **Promote community-based and culturally rooted approaches:** expand efforts that work directly with coastal and local communities, and ensure that local and traditional knowledge is valued and integrated into new initiative design and delivery.
- **Enhance institutional and national capacity in ocean literacy:** Support training-of-trainers programmes, develop locally relevant educational materials and curriculum, and use digital tools, media, and innovative communication platforms to broaden outreach and engagement.

3. Actions to be taken over the next international period

The workshop acknowledged that while ocean literacy is receiving growing attention across the region, existing efforts remain largely fragmented, with limited networking, coordination and insufficient assessment of outcomes. The lack of regional synthesis and cross-learning has also hindered the scaling-up of good practices.

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening international collaboration in the region, participants called for greater sharing of tools, materials, and good practices, and underscored the critical role of ocean research in generating credible knowledge to inform communication, and development of ocean literacy tools and materials.

The workshop also highlighted the need to bolster institutional support for ocean literacy, building on ongoing efforts and institutions in some countries in the region.

A set of collective actions will be taken for the next intersessional period:

- Developing a regional synthesis of ocean literacy in Asia, taking stock of current ocean literacy effort in Member States and documenting good practices for ocean literacy to support cross-learning;
- Exploring funding opportunities for ocean literacy initiatives, including through developing joint proposals with a focus on local communities and traditional and Indigenous knowledge;
- Initiating the UNESCO/JFIT project “Ocean Literacy for Journalists” in four pilot countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand) to enhance media engagement and strengthen ocean-literate public communication.

Annex I

Member of the WESTPAC open-ended Group of Experts (GoE) on Ocean Literacy¹



Abigail Sisti
NOAA National Ocean Service, US



Anis Faizal Reza
Gugus Mitigasi Lebak Selatan,
Indonesia



Anna Oposa
Save Philippine Seas, the Philippines



Danfeng Weng
Third Institute of Oceanography, China



Dao Viet Ha
Institute of Oceanography, Vietnam



Ferdiansyah Ferdika Faeyza
Coordinating Ministry for Human
Development and Culture of the
Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia



Lalith Amaralal Kariyawasam
National Aquatic Resources Research
and Development Agency, Sri Lanka



Mahadi Mohammad
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia



**Mohamed Redza Mohamed
Zakaria**
University Malaya, Malaysia



Polina Lobanova
Department of Oceanology, Institute of
Earth Science, Saint-Petersburg State
University, Russia



Qicheng Meng
Second Institute of Oceanography,
China



Sachiko Oguma
Ocean Policy Research Institute,
Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan



Soyeona Park
National Maritime Museum of Korea,
Republic of Korea



Suchana Apple Chavanich
Department of Marine Science,
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand



Syarifah Aini Dalimunthe
Research Center for Population,
National Research and Innovation
Agency, Indonesia

¹ More information is available at: <https://ioc-westpac.org/work-areas/ocean-literacy/ol-coordination-implementation/>



Annex II

“Promoting Ocean Literacy for Sustainable Development in the Western Pacific”
Scoping Workshop for the WESTPAC Intersessional Task Force on Ocean Literacy
9-10 October 2025, Online

Provisional Agenda

When: Day 1: 9 October 2025, 13:00 – 16:00 (Bangkok/Hanoi/Jakarta, UTC+7)
Day 2: 10 October 2025, 09:00 – 12:00 (Bangkok/Hanoi/Jakarta, UTC+7)

Language: English

Event page: <https://ioc-westpac.org/event/scoping-workshop-on-ocean-literacy/>

Workshop Objectives:

- Introduce the WESTPAC Task Force on Ocean Literacy and its expected role in the region.
- Showcase Ocean Literacy efforts in the Member States: practices, policies, lessons and learnt.
- Identify regional challenges and opportunities, and foster collaboration to advance Ocean Literacy in the Western Pacific.

Day 1: 13:00 – 16:00, 9 October 2025, Thursday

Time (UTC+7)	Agenda Item	Facilitator/Speaker
13:00 – 13:15	Setting the context: Welcome & Opening Remarks	Aileen Tan Shau Hwai , Chairperson of WESTPAC
	Introduction to the Ocean Literacy Task Force and its Expected Role	
Session 1: Informing Collective Progress		
13:15 – 13:20	Insights on Ocean Literacy: Ocean Literacy in Member States	<u>Moderator:</u> Shengle Yin

	<i>(Each speaker will be allocated 15-min presentation followed by a 3-min Q&A session and a 2-min transition period)</i>	
<u>Time and Titles:</u>		<u>Speakers:</u>
13:20 – 13:40	Building Ocean-Literate Communities: Integrating Science, Education, and Policy through BRIN	Syarifah Aini Dalimunthe , <i>National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) (Indonesia)</i>
13:40 – 14:00	Coordinating Ocean Literacy for Sustainable Development: Indonesia's Leadership in the Western Pacific	Ferdiansyah , <i>Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture Affairs (Indonesia)</i>
14:00 – 14:20	Ocean Literacy and Community-Based Disaster Preparedness: Experiences from the South Lebak Mitigation Group (GMLS), Indonesia	Anis Faisal Reza , <i>Gugus Mitigasi Lebak Selatan (GMLS) (Indonesia)</i>
14:20 – 14:40	Ocean Literacy in Malaysia – Challenges and Pathways Forward	Mahadi Mohammad , <i>Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) (Malaysia)</i>
14:40 – 15:00	Some activities to improve Ocean Literacy in Russia	Polina Lobanova , <i>Saint-Petersburg State University (Russia)</i>
15:00 – 15:20	Ocean Literacy and Sustainable Ocean Stewardship in Sri Lanka	K.H.M.L. Amaralal , <i>National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) (Sri Lanka)</i>
15:20 – 15:40	Inspiring the Next Generation: Building Ocean Literacy through Science and Education in Thailand	Suchana Chavanich , <i>Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)</i>
Session 2-1: Brainstorming and Co-development of Workplan		
15:40 – 16:00	Moderated Discussion for Day 1	<u>Moderator:</u>

	Wrap-up of Day 1	Shengle Yin & Norhanis Binti Mohammad Razalli
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Day 2: 09:00 – 12:00, 10 October 2025, Friday

Time (UTC+8)	Agenda Item	Facilitator/Speaker
09:00 – 09:15	Recap of Day 1 and Overview of Agenda for Day 2	<u>Moderator:</u> Norhanis Binti Mohammad Razalli
Session 1: Informing Collective Progress (Continued)		
09:15 – 09:20	(Continued) Insights on Ocean Literacy: Ocean Literacy in Member States <i>(Each speaker will be allocated 15-min presentation followed by a 3-min Q&A session and a 2-min transition period)</i>	<u>Moderator:</u> Norhanis Binti Mohammad Razalli
<u>Time and Titles:</u>		<u>Speakers:</u>
09:20 – 09:40	China's Ocean Literacy Journey: Practices, Efforts, and Regional Cooperation for the West Pacific	Danfeng Weng , <i>Third Institute of Oceanography (China)</i>
09:40 – 10:00	Raising Awareness of Marine Ecological Disasters among the Chinese Public	Qicheng Meng , <i>Second Institute of Oceanography (China)</i>
10:00 – 10:20	Status and Challenges of Ocean Literacy Dissemination in Japan	Sachiko Oguma , <i>Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan)</i>
10:20 – 10:40	Coastal Development and Ocean Pollution in Malaysia: An Overview	Mohamed Redza Mohamed Zakaria , <i>Universiti Malaya (Malaysia)</i>

10:40 – 11:00	From Citizens to Seatizens	Anna Oposa, Save Philippine Seas (SPS) (Philippines)
11:00 – 11:20	A Brief Review of Ocean Literacy in the U.S.	Abigail Sisti, NOAA National Ocean Service (NOS) (USA)
Session 2-2: Brainstorming and Co-development of Workplan		
11:20 – 11:50	Moderated Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we take for the next steps? • Actionable suggestions 	<u>Moderator:</u> Shengle Yin & Norhanis Binti Mohammad Razalli
11:50 – 12:00	Wrap-up for the workshop and summary of action points Closing Remarks	Shengle Yin Wenxi Zhu <i>Head of WESTPAC</i>