

# Ocean Decade Manual

## for Non-Governmental Organizations



The United Nations  
Decade of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development  
**(2021–2030)**



**2021** United Nations Decade  
**2030** of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development

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# Foreword

Sustainable ocean management relies on the broad engagement of a wide range of actors, disciplines, and experiences. By connecting science, policy, and society, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are ideally placed to unite diverse stakeholder groups and strengthen networks both within and across various fields, even more so within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade'). Over the years, NGOs have significantly expanded their role in ocean science and effective governance, championing marine and coastal ecosystem-based management, local stewardship and ocean literacy initiatives, and decision-making processes at all levels of society. They empower ocean leaders with essential skill sets, contribute to research, and create jobs, while fostering dialogue and supporting advocacy efforts that shape a sustainable future for the ocean.

Bringing this indispensable expertise and rooted in community networks, NGOs are already engaged in the Ocean Decade. To date, they have led over one hundred endorsed Decade Actions across all ocean basins. The innovative solutions they are implementing address urgent issues ranging from marine pollution and ocean observation to ocean literacy and resource mobilization. They illustrate the Ocean Decade's unique capacity to harness the collective power of civil society, and serve as examples of best practices for others wishing to engage and benefit from being part of this global UN-wide initiative.



Vidar Helgesen

**Vidar Helgesen**

Executive Secretary, UNESCO-IOC  
Assistant Director-General, UNESCO

This adaptability stems from their inherent “multi-nature”: multi-actor, multi-scale, multi-disciplinary, multi-impact. Recognizing that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to how NGOs can support sustainable ocean management, the Ocean Decade emphasizes helping them identify their optimal roles within the global ocean science movement. To do so, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO – as coordinating agency of the Decade – in partnership with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, convened the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group. A key outcome of this collaboration, this Manual is designed as a detailed and flexible roadmap for robust civil engagement in the Ocean Decade. Packed with essential insights, advice, and successful case studies, it introduces the core concepts of the Ocean Decade alongside practical tips and benefits.

We would like to express our thanks to the NGOs who took part in the Task Group and contributed to the creation of this Manual, with special recognition to the Co-Chairs – Ms. Alison Clausen, Deputy Coordinator of the Ocean Decade from UNESCO-IOC, and Dr Teresa Kennedy, Vice-President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

We hope that this roadmap will inspire action pathways and encourage many other NGOs to join the Ocean Decade ecosystem, where science and civil engagement come together for the ocean we want.



Nick Newland

**Nick Newland**

Chairperson, International Conference of NGOs  
President, NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee

# Acknowledgements

The Ocean Decade Manual for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is a joint initiative of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the Decade Coordination Unit within the secretariat of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). It was prepared and reviewed by the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group, composed of NGOs either already involved in the Ocean Decade (e.g. leading or participating in Decade Actions) or in official partnership with UNESCO. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the members of the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group, spanning 14 countries in 5 regions:

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Ms. Maria Pamela Castillo

The Ocean Decade NGO Manual was also reviewed and revised with suggestions obtained during the NGO side event held at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, from 10-12 April 2024. We thank all contributors for their insightful contributions.

# Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	4
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. The Ocean Decade</b>	<b>12</b>
Ten priority challenges to move from the ocean we have to the ocean we want	14
Ocean Decade Actions and Activities	15
The Ocean Decade coordination framework: Succeeding together	17
Co-designing transformative ocean science	20
<b>5. Getting Started</b>	<b>21</b>
Get prepared	22
Find the appropriate partners and build your proposal	22
<b>6. Diverse Opportunities for NGOs</b>	<b>24</b>
All NGOs play a critical role in the Ocean Decade	25
Wherever you start from, there's a space for you in the Ocean Decade	25
Opportunities to get involved	26
The role of co-design in the Ocean Decade	28
Case studies	29
<b>7. What's in the Ocean Decade for my NGO?</b>	<b>34</b>
Opportunities for collaboration	35
Recognition and influence	36
Support with data and knowledge management and sharing	36
<b>8. The Journey Ahead</b>	<b>37</b>

# 1.

## Introduction



The ocean is at the heart of countless activities and disciplines profoundly impacting the environment, economy, and well-being of billions of people around the world. Its health, today and tomorrow, depends on science-based approaches to marine conservation and restoration, adaptive governance, and effective management of ocean resources.

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 ('Ocean Decade') provides a transformative framework for identifying, generating, sharing, and using the critical ocean knowledge needed to sustainably manage the ocean by 2030 and beyond. Implemented by and for a wide range of stakeholders, the Ocean Decade promotes co-design, collaboration, and partnerships, offering multiple entry points to multiple interests.

As we prepare to enter the second half of its implementation, thousands of partners from all parts of society are already generating the data, information, and knowledge needed for more science-based policies and solutions at all levels. By collectively aligning research, investments, and initiatives around a set of common challenges, the Ocean Decade community contributes to a well-functioning and healthy ocean.

With their transdisciplinary expertise and deep grassroots connections, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) act as a vital link between scientific research and community engagement. Within the Ocean Decade, they play essential roles such as shaping policies, promoting ocean stewardship, and fostering solutions across the science-policy-society interface. Engagement in the Ocean Decade also brings significant benefits to NGOs, ranging from innovative partnerships to improved access to resources, data, and knowledge.

## What is this Manual for?

**This Manual aims to foster, facilitate, and support NGO participation in the Ocean Decade.** It offers a solid starting point on what, why, and how to co-design science-driven solutions 'for the ocean we want'.

It provides clear guidelines for navigating the Ocean Decade's coordination and engagement frameworks to identify partnership opportunities, as well as a structured approach for project development and implementation. Through case studies of endorsed Decade Actions, the Manual demonstrates the impact of NGOs in producing and communicating science and knowledge across society, thereby inspiring action from local to global, leaving no one behind.

## Who is this Manual for?

**Regardless of size, capacities, resources, and core focus, any NGO can find a meaningful role within the Ocean Decade.**

For ocean-focused NGOs, participating in the Ocean Decade can strengthen scientific foundations, visibility, and legitimacy through access to global knowledge, collaboration with the ocean science and policy community, and new partnerships. For NGOs engaged in sustainable development but not primarily focused on the ocean, this is an ideal opportunity to integrate ocean-related efforts more fully into their work.

This resource serves both as a practical guide and reference document for NGOs at any stage of engagement with the Ocean Decade – whether they are seeking endorsement for new initiatives or already leading endorsed Decade Actions.

## What's inside this Manual?

**This Manual provides a comprehensive checklist covering when to start, how to prepare, where to find partners, how to contribute, and why engagement in the Ocean Decade matters.**

The structure follows a step-by-step sequence – from understanding the Ocean Decade's objectives, challenges, and key concepts to practical tips, benefits, and strategies for effective involvement. The document also outlines actionable guidance on embedding the core principles of equity, inclusivity, and diversity into NGOs' work. Five case studies illustrate the Manual's practical recommendations, featuring endorsed Decade Actions led by diverse NGOs in technological innovation, policy development, environmental education, youth inclusion, and data and knowledge management.

**With this Manual as your guide, your organization can be part of a global effort to turn science into action, ensuring the ocean remains a source of life and prosperity for all. We hope it serves as both an inspiration and a practical resource, leading NGOs to make lasting contributions to the Ocean Decade's transformative goals.**

### Alison Clausen

Deputy Coordinator of the Ocean Decade, UNESCO-IOC Co-Chair, Ocean Decade NGO Task Group

### Teresa J. Kennedy

Vice-President, NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, focal point for UNESCO-IOC and ICASE Representative to UNESCO  
Co-Chair, Ocean Decade NGO Task Group

# 2.

## Executive Summary





The Ocean Decade fosters collaboration across society to advance ocean science, sustainable development, and ocean literacy. NGOs play a key role in bridging science, policy, and society, contributing to inclusive and actionable solutions. Through participation, they gain access to networks, resources, and opportunities to amplify their impact globally.

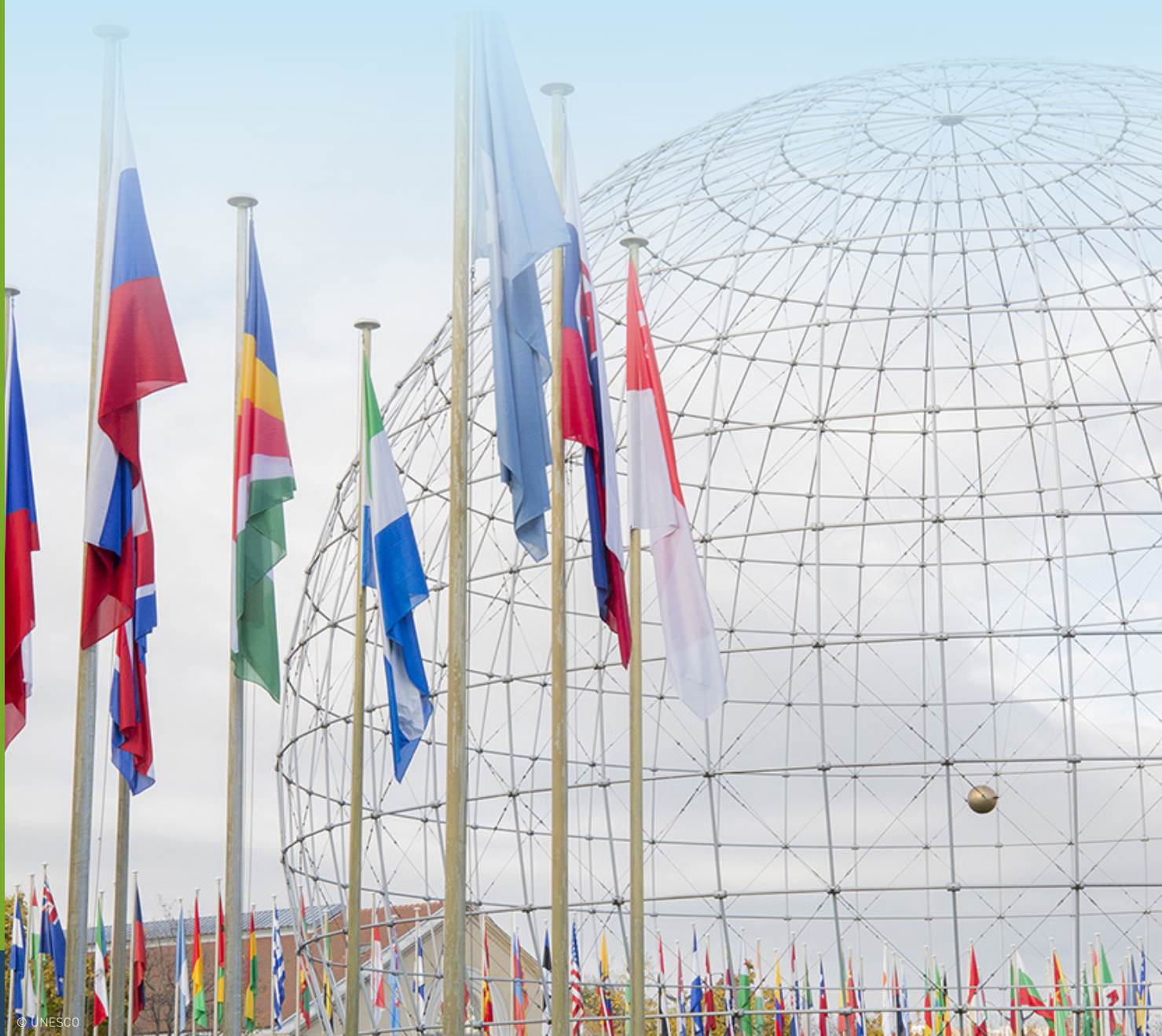
- The Ocean Decade aims to generate significant global momentum to strengthen ocean science and its contribution to sustainable development and ocean literacy.
  - A fundamental aspect of the Ocean Decade is its “whole of society” approach, which strengthens connections between science, governments, private companies, NGOs, civil society, and all actors of sustainable development. This approach emphasizes collaborative co-design and co-production of knowledge products and solutions.
  - NGOs representing diverse perspectives hold a crucial position at the science-policy-society interface. They facilitate vital connections with various stakeholders, including notably under-represented groups such as Indigenous Peoples, community rightsholders, youth, and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs).
  - NGOs can be central actors of the Ocean Decade, engaging in the co-design of ocean science that is accessible, actionable, and fit-for-purpose in their respective areas of work, such as environmental education, conservation, community work, coordination of science or education initiatives, and advocacy efforts.
- All aspects of the Ocean Decade are open to NGO participation, including leadership and partnership roles in each of the Ocean Decade Challenges as well as all types of Decade Actions. NGOs, along with other stakeholders, are invited and encouraged to team-up with international partners.
  - Since its launch in 2021, the Ocean Decade has established a comprehensive coordination network to address various challenges at national, regional, and international levels. These coordination structures are eager to offer information and assistance to NGOs, aiding them in identifying suitable partners for mutually beneficial activities.
  - Participation in the Ocean Decade offers NGOs the opportunity to increase their visibility, legitimacy, and outreach. They become part of a global movement and gain access to extensive networking opportunities within the NGO community, scientific institutions, and other strategic stakeholders.
  - The Ocean Decade provides NGOs with access to up-to-date knowledge products, best practices, and technical guidance, such as data collection and management expertise, to bolster their initiatives and enhance their capabilities. This access empowers NGOs to amplify their impact, serve as sources of inspiration to others, and find inspiration themselves.



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# 3.

## The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee



UNESCO's official partnership with NGOs is outlined in the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations, which define two categories:

- Consultative status, open to NGOs active in UNESCO's fields of competence.
- Associate status, only open to international or regional organizations already in consultative status for at least two years having made major contributions to UNESCO's programme.

In addition to their individual collaboration with UNESCO, NGO partners also have the possibility to contribute collectively to UNESCO's programme and interact with UNESCO's community of NGOs through the International Conference of NGOs and the election of an NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee acts a coordinating body, strengthening the bonds between UNESCO and civil society, and creating opportunities for collaborative action.

This Manual develops a cooperation between the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and UNESCO-IOC which started with the 13th International Forum of NGOs hosted by the Liaison Committee in Ottawa,

Canada, on 21-22 November 2022. The Forum's theme was "Mobilizing NGOs for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the Ocean Decade", leveraging the extensive network of experts, scientists, and partners associated with both initiatives and fostering global cooperation through the lens of ocean science. This Forum was funded and supported by three NGOs in official partnership, the Associated Country Women of the World, You Foundation, and Esperanto International. Further support and partnership came from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Ottawa Tourism, and Air Canada.

During the 17th International Forum of NGOs, held online on 10-11 December 2024, ocean science was a returning topic featured under the Forum's theme of "African Leadership, Experience, and Expertise in the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development".

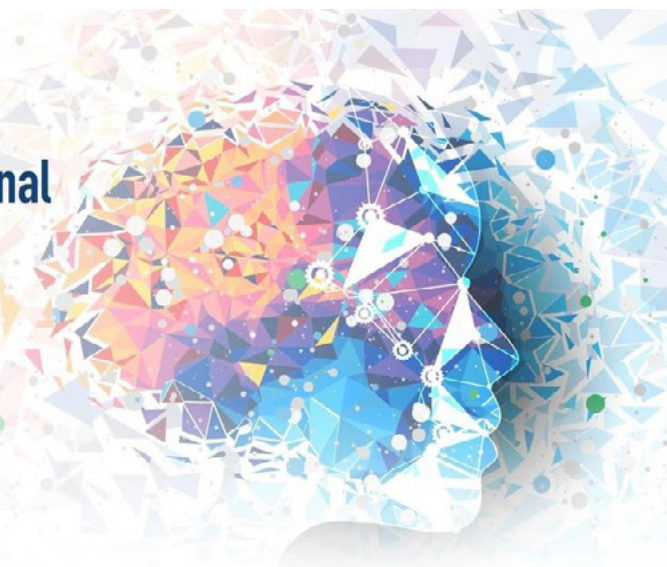
You can learn more about the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee at [www.ngo-unesco.net](http://www.ngo-unesco.net) and about NGO Partnership status at <https://www.unesco.org/en/partnerships/ngo-foundations>.

13<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO

## Mobilising NGOs for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the Ocean Decade

21-22 November 2022  
Ottawa, Canada

ngo-unesco  
liaison committee



An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The left side shows clear, turquoise water with gentle waves washing onto a wide, white sandy beach. To the right of the beach, there is a dense line of palm trees and other tropical vegetation. Behind the trees, several buildings are visible, some with light-colored walls and others with more rustic, possibly thatched or corrugated metal roofs. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast by the trees and buildings.

4.

# The Ocean Decade

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), known as the 'Ocean Decade', is a global initiative that calls for collaborative efforts to advance ocean science for sustainable development.

The Ocean Decade vision is: 'The science we need for the ocean we want'. This vision encompasses a clean, healthy and resilient, safe, productive, predicted, accessible and inspiring ocean that fully contributes to achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Ocean Decade adopts a solutions-oriented approach, providing a convening framework to foster partnerships and develop the scientific knowledge needed to catalyze transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development, strengthening the connection of people and the ocean. It seeks to initiate a collective societal movement that links diverse stakeholders in sustainable development with the scientific community to collaboratively design and deliver science tailored to specific needs (fit-for-purpose science).

These stakeholders include:

- National, subnational, and local governments
- Scientific institutions and organizations
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Local communities and rightsholders
- Private companies and investors

- Philanthropic organizations
- Educators and other professionals
- UN agencies and regional organizations
- Youth organizations
- Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge holders
- And many others (e.g. tourism and hospitality sector, fishing and aquaculture industry)

Throughout the Ocean Decade, partners will generate the necessary data, information, and knowledge to support more robust science-informed policies and stronger science-policy-society interfaces at global, regional, national, and local levels. Additionally, they will drive transformational change across all geographic regions, genders, sectors, academic disciplines, and age groups.

The Ocean Decade also examines primary challenges, emphasizing the critical need for an equitable and just distribution of the benefits derived from marine conservation and sustainable utilization, particularly to Indigenous Peoples and community rightsholders who have historically served as custodians of our shared ocean.

**TIP: Both dimensions of the Ocean Decade—co-designing ocean science to contribute to sustainable development goals and strengthening the connection between people and the ocean—can be a good fit for NGOs.**













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# Ten priority challenges to move from the ocean we have to the ocean we want

To structure action and progress toward the Ocean we want, ten Ocean Decade Challenges have been identified which articulate the most immediate priorities for the Ocean Decade.

Fig. 1, Ocean Decade Challenges.

	<b>Challenge 1</b> Understand and beat marine pollution		<b>Challenge 6</b> Increase community resilience to ocean and coastal risks
	<b>Challenge 2</b> Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity		<b>Challenge 7</b> Sustainably expand the Global Ocean Observing System
	<b>Challenge 3</b> Sustainably nourish the global population		<b>Challenge 8</b> Create a digital representation of the ocean
	<b>Challenge 4</b> Develop a sustainable, resilient and equitable ocean economy		<b>Challenge 9</b> Skills, knowledge, technology and participation for all
	<b>Challenge 5</b> Unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change		<b>Challenge 10</b> Restore society's relationship with the ocean

In preparation of the [2024 Ocean Decade Conference](#) (10-12 April 2024) that took place in Barcelona, Spain, a comprehensive strategic planning effort known as [Vision 2030](#) was initiated across the Decade to establish a unified framework for measuring success in addressing each of the Ocean Decade Challenges.

[Ten White Papers](#), each dedicated to a specific Challenge, have been developed through collaborative efforts that began in early 2023. These papers present

a thorough and forward-thinking strategic vision, addressing user requirements, essential datasets, residual gaps in scientific knowledge, and incorporating both scientific and traditional wisdom. They also outline the necessary resources, infrastructure, partnerships, capacity building initiatives, and technological solutions needed for each Challenge to be effectively addressed by 2030.



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# Ocean Decade Actions and Activities

Central to the Ocean Decade are the [Decade Actions](#), which encompass concrete initiatives undertaken globally throughout the Decade to realize “the science we need for the ocean we want”. These Actions and Activities represent voluntary contributions from a diverse array of stakeholders, including NGOs, private sector entities, intergovernmental or regional organizations, educators, local or national governments, and Indigenous Peoples and local community members, recognized as crucial stewards of oceanic and marine environments.

**TIP: Everyone can take part in the Ocean Decade and submit a Decade Action. Decade Actions that are co-designed by diverse and international partners are highly valuable.**

Hundreds of **Decade Actions** are being implemented globally today, with many more expected in the coming years. Decade Actions are categorized based on their scale. Regardless of your ambition, resources, or scope, there is an opportunity for engagement.

Some **Decade Activities** are standalone initiatives such as one-time events, webinars, conferences, workshops, and publications. Occasionally, these Activities include creative endeavors like poster competitions and the production of commemorative items such as postal stamps. Events typically span from 1 to 28 days, while other Activities may extend up to one year.

Additionally, Activities can include published works, such as on-going publications, that do not have a specified end date. To be officially endorsed, Activities need to show how they contribute to the Decade Challenges or to specific Programmes, Projects, or Contributions. Access the Guidance Note for Applicants [here](#).

**TIP: Utilize the Ocean Decade Network to propose an Activity for official endorsement at any time, integrating it into the global efforts underway aimed at shaping the Ocean we envision.**

**Programmes, Projects, and Contributions** offer the opportunity for a stronger impact in the Ocean Decade.

- **Programmes** are large-scale initiatives implemented at the global or regional scale and will contribute to the achievement of one or more

of the Ocean Decade Challenges. They are long-term, multi-year, typically interdisciplinary, and multi-national, comprising component projects that may or may not be fully defined at the time of endorsement.

- **Projects** are discrete, focused undertakings that may be regional, national, or subnational and typically contribute to an identified Ocean Decade Programme.

**Decade Actions** are solicited by the Ocean Decade Coordination Unit through semi-annual Calls for Decade Actions, launched every 15 April and 15 October. These calls usually have a thematic or regional focus, based on gaps identified in the Ocean Decade and priorities set collectively. The Calls for Decade Actions can also provide opportunities for support.

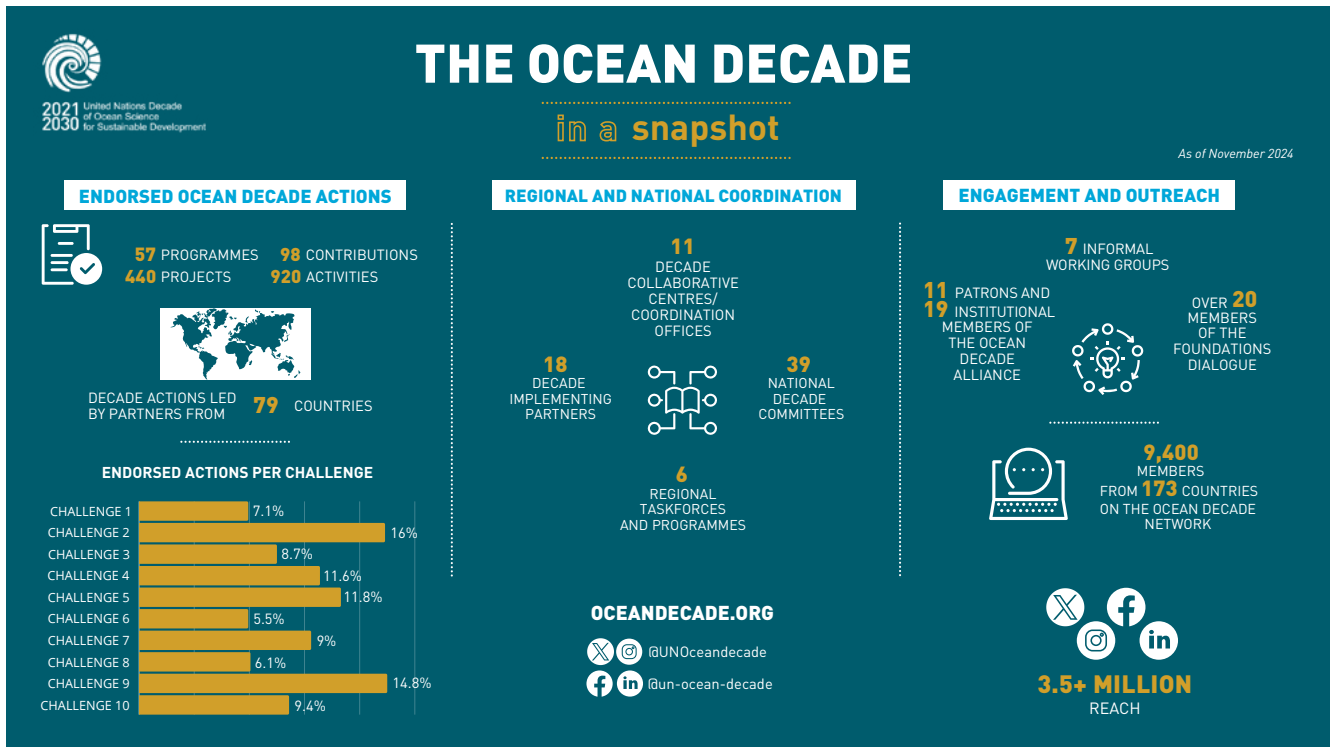
For example, the [Call for Decade Actions No. 06/2023](#), included a new process to facilitate and support participation by teams from Africa and Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), a distinct group of 39 States and 18 Associate Members of the United Nations regional commissions that face unique social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities.

Teams, including NGOs, could apply for support to co-design a fully developed Decade Action. Successful applicants were trained and received guidance to submit their developed idea for endorsement under Call for Decade Actions No. 07/2024 in May 2024. The idea was to take robust concepts, aligned with Ocean Decade Challenges and regional priorities, and facilitate their collaborative development and implementation.

**TIP: Make sure to check the new [Call for Decade Actions No. 08/2024](#) and the Calls that are launched every 15 April and 15 October, to determine how your activities could fit and how your NGO could benefit from assistance to develop a Decade Action.**

**A last category, Contributions**, encompasses in-kind or financial contributions to the coordination functions of the Decade or to Decade Actions. This includes [Decade Collaborative Centres and Coordination Offices](#), and [Decade Implementing Partners](#). Contributions are accepted on a rolling basis at any time. Detailed guidance on Contributions can be found [here](#).

Fig. 2, Endorsed Actions, regional and national coordination, and engagement and outreach (as of November 2024).



The endorsement criteria for all Decade Actions represent a set of ideals that endorsed initiatives are expected to uphold and advance throughout the Ocean Decade. While not every criterion needs to be addressed, proponents must briefly describe how the proposed initiative aligns with the relevant criteria.

Proposed Actions should:

- Contribute to achieving one or more of the following Decade objectives:
  - Objective 1: Identify critical ocean knowledge
  - Objective 2: Build capacity and generate knowledge
  - Objective 3: Increase the use of ocean knowledge
- Accelerate the generation or use of knowledge and understanding of the ocean, with a specific focus on knowledge that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and complementary policy frameworks and initiatives.
- Be co-designed and/or co-delivered by knowledge generators and users, and thus facilitating the uptake of science and ocean knowledge for policy, decision-making, management and/or innovation.
- Ensure that all data and resulting knowledge are provided in an open access, shared, and discoverable manner.
- Strengthen existing partnerships or create new partnerships across nations and/or between diverse ocean actors, including users of ocean science (individuals, organizations, or communities that apply the knowledge, data, and findings from ocean science in their work or decision-making processes).
- Contribute toward capacity development, including, but not limited to, beneficiaries in SIDS, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).
- Overcome barriers to diversity and equity, including gender, generational, and geographic diversity.
- Collaborate with and engage local community members, Indigenous Peoples, and traditional knowledge holders.



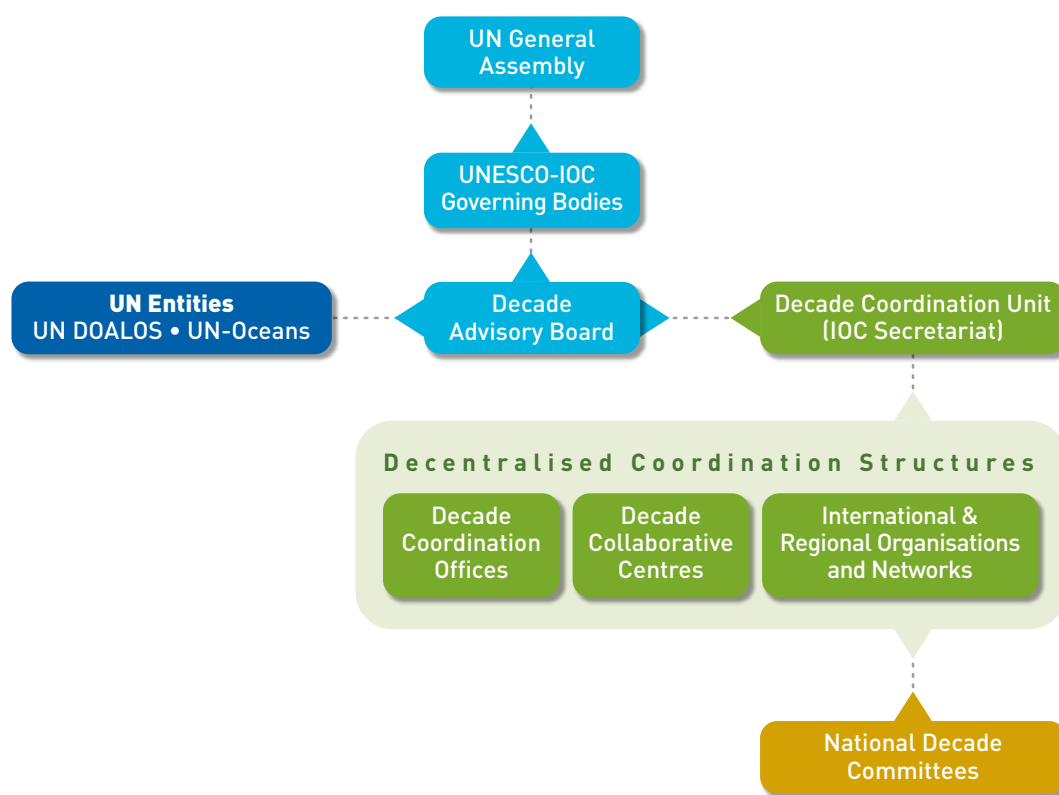
# The Ocean Decade coordination framework: Succeeding together

The UN General Assembly mandated [UNESCO-IOC](#), the UN body responsible for supporting global ocean science, to coordinate the preparations for, and implementation of, the Ocean Decade.

Within the IOC Secretariat, the Decade Coordination Unit is the central structure responsible for developing and coordinating the Ocean Decade. Its tasks include

managing Calls for Decade Actions, catalyzing decentralized coordination structures (see below) and other initiatives to support Decade Actions, facilitating connections between Decade Actions with resource providers, coordinating communication and engagement activities for and between key stakeholder groups, reporting on the Ocean Decade, and setting priorities, among other directives.

Fig. 3, The Ocean Decade coordination framework.



The [Decade Advisory Board](#) provides strategic advice on the implementation of the Ocean Decade. The 15 experts selected by the UNESCO-IOC for the period 2024–2025, come from over a dozen countries and represent government, private sector, philanthropy, civil society, and the scientific community.

The Decade Coordination Unit is complemented by [decentralized coordination structures](#), hosted by UN agencies, national governments, international or regional organizations, or other partners.

[National Decade Committees](#) (NDCs) are voluntary, inclusive, multi-agency and multi-stakeholder platforms set up to coordinate, support, and increase

their country's participation in the Ocean Decade by mobilizing the entire “ocean community” at the national level, encompassing all producers and users of ocean science.

NDCs strengthen the critical connection between local actors and the global Ocean Decade community. They share the invitation to participate in the Ocean Decade, support and connect the different stakeholders and initiatives, and enhance access to Decade benefits, such as data, products, science-policy advice, or capacity development opportunities. They also facilitate processes to articulate the global challenges and priorities of the Ocean Decade with national policies, strategies, and priorities.

Fig. 4, National Decade Committees in 39 countries (as of November 2024).



[Decade Collaborative Centres \(DCCs\)](#) and [Decade Coordination Offices \(DCOs\)](#) are decentralized coordination structures hosted by international or major regional non-UN organizations or established UN-organizations. They provide technical support to the Decade Coordination Unit by catalyzing and coordinating Decade Actions at a regional or thematic level, particularly in relation to specific Decade Challenges.

DCCs and DCOs foster collaboration, encourage the co-design and application of scientific knowledge, and maximize resource efficiency among the diverse

stakeholders involved in the Ocean Decade. They also actively support the Ocean Decade Communities of Practice that align with their thematic or regional focus, aiding in their organization, membership, and active participation through the [Ocean Decade Network](#). DCOs are hosted by UN entities, while DCCs are hosted by international or regional institutions, each supported by a dedicated team and operational resources. The aim is to establish at least one DCC or DCO for every Decade Challenge and each major ocean basin.

Fig. 5, Thematic and regional coordination.

Thematic coordination		Regional coordination	
<b>Ocean Observing</b> IOC-GOOS	<b>Ocean-Climate Nexus</b> First Institute of Oceanography, China	<b>Indian Ocean</b> INCOIS	<b>Pacific Islands Region</b> The Pacific Community (SPC)
<b>Ocean Data Sharing</b> IOC-IODE	<b>Ocean-Climate Solutions and Innovation</b> Ocean Visions	<b>Western Pacific</b> IOC-WESTPAC	<b>Southern Ocean</b> SCAR
<b>Ocean Prediction</b> Mercator Ocean International	<b>Coastal Resilience</b> University of Bologna	<b>Africa</b> IOCAFRICA	<b>Caribbean</b> IOCARIBE
<b>Connecting People and Ocean</b> IOC-Venice	<b>Sustainable Ocean Economy</b> <i>Being scoped</i>		

Regional DCCs and DCOs serve as valuable resources for staying informed about regional developments and identifying potential partners, particularly if a National Decade Committee is not available. Thematic DCCs and DCOs contribute to the coordinating Decade Actions addressing specific Decade Challenges, fostering new partnerships and Actions across the Decade Challenges. They develop a precise understanding of how Decade Actions combine to increase knowledge in these areas and identify existing gaps.

**TIP: DCCs and DCOs organize events, distribute newsletters, and share information through social media. Check which ones, regional or thematic, are relevant for your NGO's work and get in touch with them.**



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# Co-designing transformative ocean science

The Ocean Decade calls for 'transformative science' and a 'revolution in how that science is produced, used and disseminated'. To change the current trajectory of ocean decline — 'the ocean we have' — and bring us towards a thriving and sustainable ocean — 'the ocean we want' — by 2030, the following characteristics are recommended:

- It is co-designed and co-delivered in a multi-stakeholder environment, relevant and responsive across the entire value-chain, from knowledge generation to applications and services.
- It is solutions-focused, contributing to various potential solutions including policy, decision-making, management or governance

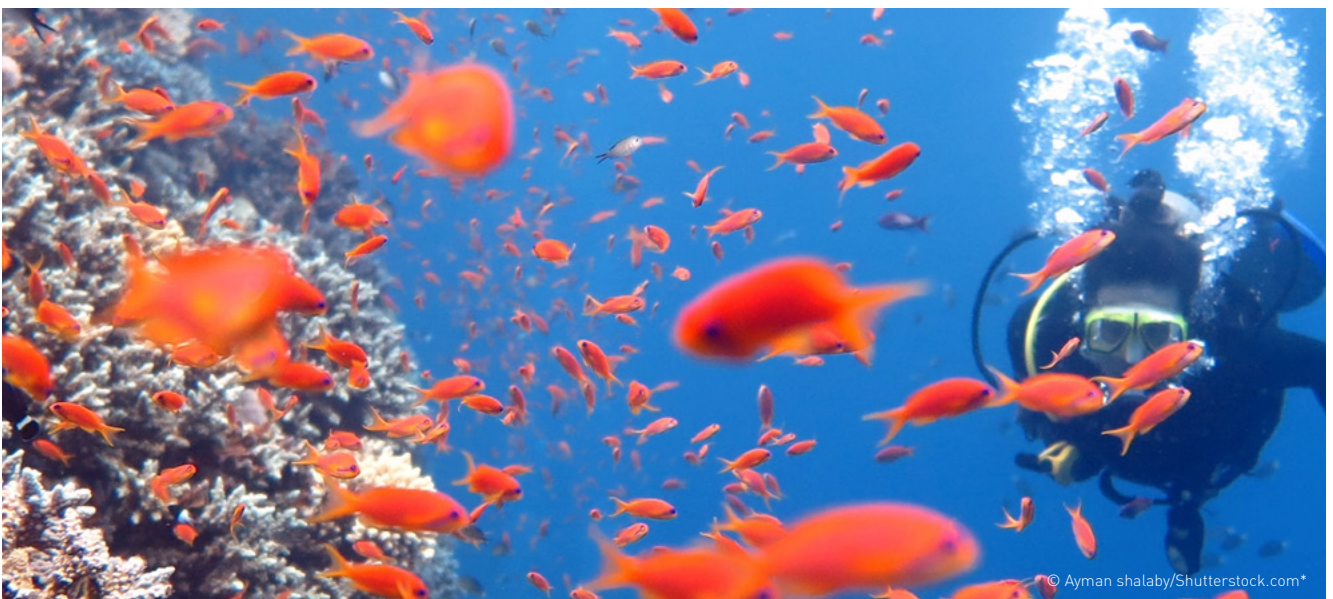
frameworks, and technology development and innovation.

- Where needed, it is ambitious, visionary, forward-thinking, and encompasses diverse geographical regions.
- It spans across disciplines, actively incorporating both natural and social science fields.
- It embraces local and Indigenous knowledge as key knowledge sources.
- It strives for generational, gender, and geographic diversity in all its manifestations.
- It is communicated in universally comprehensible formats that inspire enthusiasm about the ocean, leading to behavioral shifts.
- It is openly shared and accessible for reuse.

## For more information:

- The Ocean Decade website: <https://oceandecade.org/>
- The Ocean Decade Network: <https://forum.oceandecade.org>
- [Ocean Decade Implementation Plan summary](#)
- [Ocean Decade Progress Report, July 2022 - June 2023](#)
- [Co-designing the science we need for the ocean we want](#)
- [Best practice manual for National Decade Committees](#)

**TIP: The Ocean Decade needs your NGO (and your NGO probably needs the Ocean Decade)! Your NGO's field experience is invaluable in identifying the needs of communities and various stakeholders, helping to co-create and implement relevant solutions.**



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# 5.

## Getting Started



# Get prepared

- **Become acquainted with the Ocean Decade:** Join the [Ocean Decade Network](#) and subscribe to the [Ocean Decade newsletter](#).
- **Make contact with your [National Decade Committee](#)** (if there is one), or the relevant regional [Decade Collaborative Centre](#) or [Decade Coordination Office](#): Learn about what's happening in your country.
- **Define what your NGO would like to focus on:** Learn about what's already happening in the Ocean Decade in this area by looking at the endorsed [Decade Actions](#) and discussing ideas with the relevant [DCC or DCO](#).
  - Reach out to other NGOs or existing Decade Actions in the region/sector. Discuss with endorsed Actions how your NGO could work with them or complement their work through a new Decade Action.
- **Review the current opportunities available to [take action](#):** Determine which category of Decade Action might be suitable for your NGO, depending on the size and resources (Activity, Project, or Programme).
  - **Start small:** NGOs can submit a Decade Activity at any time.
  - **Collaborate:** Identify a Decade Programme interested in expanding its current initiative or developing a new one, and discuss with this Programme how to best submit a collaborative Project in the next Call for Decade Actions.

**TIP: You can find other NGOs already involved in the Ocean Decade by accessing the [Ocean Decade Network](#). Look either at the Institution directory or at the Member directory and filter for NGO as the stakeholder group or partner in a Decade Action.**

# Find the appropriate partners and build your proposal

- **Discuss with the NDC, DCC, DCO and/or Programme:** Check if they know of a group of stakeholders already planning to submit a Decade Action or how they can support your NGO in finding relevant partners to initiate and [co-design](#) a Decade Action.
- **Search the Ocean Decade Network:** Look for [events](#), browse the Forum, or even start a new discussion to introduce your NGO. Explain your involvement and specify the kind of partner or support your NGO is seeking.
- **Co-design support:** The Ocean Decade might provide specific support for co-design. Check the [Request for Decade Actions](#).

**TIP: UNESCO-IOC highly values diversity in the partners of Decade Actions, including youth organizations, Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Engage as early as possible with relevant partners to co-design your Action right from the start.**

Fig. 6, Useful entry points in the Ocean Decade for NGOs.

## Join the [Ocean Decade Network](#) to connect with the Ocean Decade community

Community of Practice for NGOs (coming soon)	39 National Decade Committees	Decade Programmes	ECOP Programme
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Thematic coordination	
<b>Ocean Observing</b> IOC-GOOS	<b>Ocean-Climate Nexus</b> First Institute of Oceanography, China
<b>Ocean Data Sharing</b> IOC-IODE	<b>Ocean-Climate Solutions and Innovation</b> Ocean Visions
<b>Ocean Prediction</b> Mercator Ocean International	<b>Coastal Resilience</b> University of Bologna
<b>Connecting People and Ocean</b> IOC-Venice	<b>Sustainable Ocean Economy</b> <i>Being scoped</i>

Regional coordination	
<b>Indian Ocean</b> INCOIS	<b>Pacific Islands Region</b> The Pacific Community (SPC)
<b>Western Pacific</b> IOC-WESTPAC	<b>Southern Ocean</b> SCAR
<b>Africa</b> IOCAFRICA	<b>Caribbean</b> IOCARIBE

# 6.

## Diverse Opportunities for NGOs





# All NGOs play a critical role in the Ocean Decade

The Ocean Decade NGOs bring diverse experiences, grassroots connections, and commitment to environmental stewardship, significantly advancing the Decade's goals. NGOs act as vital intermediaries, bridging the gap between scientific research and community engagement. They translate complex scientific finding into actionable strategies, ensuring local communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders comprehend the importance of sustainable ocean practices.

As active contributors to scientific research, policy, advocacy, and community empowerment, NGOs form an integral part of the collaborative effort needed to achieve the Ocean Decade's ambitious objectives. They serve as catalysts for innovation and collaboration. Through their agility and responsiveness, NGOs leverage partnerships with academia, industry, and governments, bringing a

wealth of local knowledge to the table and building a shared sense of responsibility for the health and well-being of our ocean.

The Ocean Decade benefits from the inclusive and participatory nature of NGO involvement, fostering a dynamic and holistic approach to addressing issues related to marine conservation, sustainable resource management, and climate change resilience.

There are various opportunities for NGOs to actively participate in the Ocean Decade, fostering a collective effort toward advancing sustainable ocean science and development, extending beyond marine conservation, sustainable resource management, or climate resilience. The key is to identify the intersections between the work of your NGO and the objectives of the Ocean Decade.

## Wherever you start from, there's a space for you in the Ocean Decade

Whatever the size, resources, and core activities of your NGO, you will find many reasons and opportunities to engage in the Ocean Decade and strengthen connections to ocean science. These include opportunities for engagement through:

- Local communities
- Ocean literacy, science literacy, **and** environmental education programmes
- Advocacy efforts at local, national, regional, or global scales
- Youth organizations
- NGOs and other organizations (e.g. research and educational institutions, government agencies, private sector entities, international organizations)
- Among many other avenues for meaningful impact

If your NGO already has a significant focus on the ocean, the Ocean Decade is a great opportunity to strengthen the scientific background, visibility, and legitimacy of established activities. Access state-of-the-art knowledge from around the world, work with scientific institutions

to adapt knowledge to the needs of your NGO's community and networks, co-design new knowledge products, and develop partnerships with local scientific institutions to build a close and personal connection with ocean science.

If your NGO doesn't yet focus on the ocean but is contributing to sustainable development, the Ocean Decade provides a great opportunity to learn more about the connections between the ocean and the SDGs and devote more attention to the ocean in your activities. Even in landlocked countries, states, and communities, the remote connection to the ocean is significant, and NGOs and other stakeholders have their place in the Ocean Decade. Crucially, your lived experience and local knowledge can be a significant contribution.

**TIP: Whatever the current focus of your NGO, the Ocean Decade provides inspiration and knowledge that will support your NGO's commitment to sustainable development.**

For NGOs that are already well-connected with science and involved in the co-design and co-creation of knowledge, such as through citizen science or Indigenous and local knowledge, your expertise is needed. The Ocean Decade provides opportunities to initiate or strengthen your relationship with ocean science. Your grassroots connections and proximity to communities will be extremely valuable. We welcome NGOs that are working with Indigenous Peoples and community rightsholders.

Decade Actions are very diverse in size, nature, and resources required. Here are a few examples:

- **Communications:** Contribute to the global visibility of the Ocean Decade, ocean science and ocean literacy. Your NGO can use [communications assets and outreach materials](#) developed during the Ocean Decade and tailor them to fit your specific audience(s) and in their languages.

- **Decade Activities:** These can be one-off events, exhibitions, conferences, or workshops that initiate partnerships and more ambitious actions.
- **Decade Projects:** Large, international, multi-stakeholder endeavors hosted by Decade Programmes. They benefit from the assistance and coordination of Decade structures, facilitating access to partners, sharing know-how, products, and complementing skill sets.
- **Decade Programmes:** The largest, most ambitious actions with many participants, ensuring you won't be alone!

**TIP: There's always an option to start small and develop your NGO's ambition and capacity over time.**

## Opportunities to get involved

The Ocean Decade welcomes collaborative research endeavors as well as community-driven initiatives, recognizing that both are essential for fostering innovative solutions, advancing research collaboration, advocacy, and promoting ocean literacy, ultimately contributing to sustainable ocean stewardship for future generations.

Forging partnerships between scientific institutions, universities, and NGOs involved in ocean-related research enhances interdisciplinary linkages within ocean science and promotes the exchange of valuable data. This increases scientific understanding of ocean ecosystems, marine life, and the impact of human activities on the ocean, integrating different aspects of all 17 SDGs and encouraging governments around the world to set national targets and incorporate their goals into national planning processes, policies, and strategies. It also contributes to environmental monitoring, biodiversity conservation, resource management, climate studies, disaster preparedness, and policy formation.

**TIP: The Ocean Decade aims to support the implementation of numerous SDGs. NGOs can play a role in leveraging ocean knowledge to promote equity and a human rights-based approach to ocean conservation and sustainable development.**

These collaborations benefit researchers and extend to primary and secondary school students, providing genuine examples and experiences that help the younger generation become well-informed citizens, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for ocean science. Moreover, these initiatives also play a crucial role in educating older generations who may lack an understanding of ocean science and its importance. By involving communities in workshops, seminars, and hands-on activities, NGOs bridge knowledge gaps across age groups. This comprehensive educational approach ensures that older generations, often key decision-makers in communities, gain insights into sustainable practices and the interconnectedness of ocean health with broader environmental and societal challenges. As a result, both younger and older generations are empowered to advocate for and engage in sustainable ocean management.

NGOs play a vital role in fostering an integrated and holistic approach to the ocean and its interaction with people by connecting ocean knowledge and activities with the coast and land. Inspired by ridge-to-reef or "whole of islands" approaches, prioritizing social justice and equity in ocean science promotes under-represented and vulnerable groups and supports just transitions (e.g. of fisherfolk and aquaculture, communities harvesting mangroves, coastal relocation).

Recognizing and acknowledging the significant contribution of Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge holders, local communities, small-scale fishers, and others to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, it is imperative to advance a human rights-based approach for marine conservation. For instance, the implementation of initiatives such as the [Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainability of Small-Scale Fisheries](#) in the context of food security and poverty eradication exemplifies this commitment. Promoting ocean literacy through advocacy and education raises community awareness about the interconnectedness of the ocean with broader societal challenges.

Scenarios could include:

- **NGOs focused on diverse causes** such as human rights-based approaches in conservation, poverty alleviation, and health can include ocean-related issues into their activities by adopting an integrated and sustainable approach to address climate change impacts, sustainable livelihoods, public health, disaster resilience, and the linkages between social, economic, and environmental well-being.
- **NGOs involved in community development or social issues** can engage local communities in workshops, seminars, and events that promote ocean literacy and sustainable practices, fostering a sense of responsibility and connection to local marine environments. These educational experiences produce a mindset that is more likely to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to the conservation of marine ecosystems.
- **NGOs involved in language learning, storytelling, and local knowledge sharing** can integrate local wisdom into conservation efforts, strengthening community bonds and enriching environmental understanding inside as well as outside of their local communities.
- **NGOs involved in artistic and cultural activities** can highlight the significance of the ocean, fostering community pride and connection through artistic expression, which can be a powerful tool for instilling a sense of appreciation and stewardship.
- **NGOs involved in eco-friendly tourism or responsible outdoor enterprises**, such as wildlife observation, fishing, and community clean-up initiatives, can provide tours that emphasize the importance of ocean ecosystems, marine biodiversity, and the impact of human activities. Educated tourists are more likely to appreciate and actively support conservation efforts having shared positive educational experiences and may become ambassadors for ocean conservation.
- **NGOs involved in community gardens and coastal restoration activities** can involve residents in environmental conservation, providing hands-on involvement and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local environment.

These advocacy efforts build awareness and knowledge about ocean health through both social and environmental lenses, and can lead to policy development or influence.

- By integrating ocean-related issues into their activities, NGOs can contribute to achieving broader sustainable development goals and create a more resilient, interconnected approach to addressing global challenges.
- By deepening understanding and cultivating a sense of stewardship toward the ocean, NGOs play a crucial role in building resilient and informed communities that actively engage in sustainable local environmental management. This proactive involvement helps ensure the long-term health and vitality of marine ecosystems, benefiting both the communities and the broader global environment.

**TIP: The Ocean Decade is not limited to what's happening in the ocean. In fact, the long-term health of our ocean and our planet is inseparable from broader societal challenges.**

# The role of co-design in the Ocean Decade

Co-design plays a pivotal role within the Ocean Decade framework, emphasizing collaborative approaches to problem-solving and initiative development. NGOs hold significant potential to contribute substantially. The 2021 IOC publication entitled "[Co-designing the Science we need for the ocean we want: Guidance and recommendations for collaborative approaches to Decade Actions](#)" stands as a cornerstone resource in this endeavor. Compiled from insights gleaned during a series of global and regional webinars convened in late 2020, this publication offers comprehensive recommendations tailored for stakeholders, NGOs, and other community members. By adhering to these recommendations, NGOs can effectively engage in the co-design process, thereby advancing the Ocean Decade's overarching vision. Additional examples of potential NGO involvement are provided below.

## Expanding research and innovation:

- Research projects, including conservation research
- Leading or supporting innovative ocean-based activities (e.g. kelp forest aquaculture)
- Networks of experimental science, pilot testing, and experience sharing
- Multi-disciplinary projects (including social and human sciences, behavioral sciences and psychology, historical knowledge, and memory)

## Contributing to diversity and inclusivity:

- Promoting the principles of [open science](#)
- Connecting with local communities (such as small-scale fishers)
- Integrating Indigenous and local knowledge
- Implementing principles such as [free, prior and informed consent \(FPIC\)](#)
- Engaging in citizen science
- Working with ECOPs and youth (including youth-led initiatives)

## Uptake of ocean science:

- Facilitating the appropriation of knowledge and solutions by individuals, communities, and decision makers
- Improving the "connection with the ocean" and catalyzing behavioral change
- Promoting ocean literacy through formal education and informal outreach activities
- Blending Indigenous and local knowledge with science
- Innovating in communication and information tools (e.g. virtual reality, augmented reality, immersive simulations, serious games, interactive websites, mobile applications, data visualization platforms, dynamic maps, social media campaigns)
- Conducting science-based advocacy activities
- Expanding international networks
- Showcasing local projects and collaborations within regional/international networks

In addition to providing guidance and recommendations for collaborative engagement, the Ocean Decade offers numerous opportunities for NGOs to actively participate in established initiatives and contribute to the Decade's objectives. These opportunities include joining multi-disciplinary research projects, where NGOs can partner with scientific institutions to explore and address complex ocean-related issues. NGOs can also participate in advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about ocean conservation and influence policy development at local, national, and international levels. Furthermore, the Ocean Decade encourages the creation and implementation of community-driven initiatives that leverage local knowledge and practices for sustainable ocean management. By engaging in these activities, NGOs can help bridge the gap between scientific research and community action, ensuring that ocean conservation efforts are inclusive and equitable.

# Case studies



## Promoting policy development: Driving adaptation solutions for resilient coastal communities



Led by the Ocean & Climate Platform, Sea'ties is a Decade Action aimed at facilitating the development of public policies and the implementation of adaptation solutions to support coastal cities threatened by sea level rise. Its activities are structured around three main objectives:

- Collect and disseminate knowledge on coastal cities' adaptation.
- Share experiences among scientists, elected officials, urban planners, and all stakeholders involved in coastal adaptation.
- Support political action in favor of adaptation at local, national, and international scales.

Sea'ties organizes regional workshops in Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, the U.S. West Coast, West Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean, bringing together diverse stakeholders to identify local issues, share experiences, and reflect on recommendations to better prepare coastal cities for adaptation. Drawing upon the expertise of more than 230 practitioners convened during these workshops, and backed by the support of 80 organizations globally, Sea'ties has published a comprehensive series of ["Policy recommendations to coastal cities to adapt to sea level rise."](#)

These recommendations, centred around solutions, social justice, knowledge, and finance, are intended for local, national, regional, and international decision-makers. Additionally, their White Paper, entitled ["Investment protocol: Unlocking financial flows for coastal adaptation to climate change and resilience building"](#) provides a summary of funding options and a mapping of key stakeholders. Sea'ties Regional Reports summarize challenges and share recommendations and leading practices.



© Ocean & Climate Platform.\*

Continuing the activities of the Sea'ties project and in preparation of the [2025 United Nations Ocean Conference](#) (UNOC), the Ocean & Climate Platform is coordinating the foundation of the Ocean Rise and Coastal Resilience Coalition of cities and regions. UNESCO-IOC has been tasked to lead a working group dedicated to the effective integration of knowledge production and dissemination into the Coalition's activities.

As part of the Ocean Decade Programme [Global Ecosystem for Ocean Solutions](#) (GEOS), Sea'ties has gained prominence within the expert community. This collaboration has been instrumental in shaping activities and policy recommendations, ensuring a robust and informed approach to coastal adaptation. Sea'ties aims to resolve difficulties in connecting with certain knowledge systems, geographies, and types of actors (e.g. under-served communities and minorities, Indigenous communities) due to multiple barriers.

To facilitate trans-disciplinary work across existing silos, Sea'ties hopes that NGOs and organizations (e.g. women's associations), social and human sciences (e.g. behavioral sciences), and stakeholders (e.g. architects, businesses) not directly involved in ocean issues will become increasingly involved in the Ocean Decade.



## Advancing environmental education: Transforming lives, transforming the sea



### TRANSFORMAR

TransformMAR, an endorsed Ocean Decade Project conceived by Associação TransformMAR and supported by the Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA), is an innovative approach to environmental education. It provides hands-on experiences in marine environments for youth from disadvantaged communities through scuba diving.

Recognized as a project aligned with the Ocean Decade, TransformMAR gains additional credibility, becoming a powerful tool to raise awareness about the importance of ocean preservation. Through this organization, the Associação TransformMAR has established significant strategic alliances, such as collaborations with the management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) like ICMBio Alcatrazes and the Northern Coast Marine Protected Area in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. These partnerships with government agencies that administer these MPAs have enabled joint work with coastal and traditional communities to strengthen awareness of marine conservation. Both the TransformMAR Project and the management of these MPAs have contributed to the restoration of vital marine ecosystems, such as reef environments, with the primary goal of empowering Traditional Peoples with a 'sense of ownership' over a marine protected area so that the local population becomes the main ally in managing it.

The Ocean Decade provides an enabling environment for networking and collaboration among NGOs and researchers worldwide, notably through the [Ocean Decade Network](#). The TransformMAR Project has greatly benefited from and contributed to this global network, establishing partnerships with organizations worldwide. Today, the TransformMAR Project generates and shares data with researchers and NGOs globally, enriching preservation initiatives and expanding its impact. Associação TransformMAR's expertise in

diving and frequent contact with the sea can now be utilized in partnership with researchers and NGOs to produce a low-cost, globally sourced knowledge base. Additionally, the recognition and media coverage associated with the Ocean Decade have increased the visibility of TransformMAR's initiatives, helping to raise awareness and mobilize support for its causes. Only through cooperation among NGOs, research institutions, researchers, local communities, and Traditional Peoples can we move towards building "the science we need for the ocean we want".



© TransformMAR.\*

A key aspect of TransformMAR is its emphasis on capacity building and engaging local communities. By empowering local populations with knowledge, skills, and tools, the project seeks to ensure sustainability and long-term impact, while at the same time, raising awareness and advocating for ocean-related issues at both local and international levels. Its effective advocacy demonstrates the importance of combining grassroots actions with broader policy influence, a strategy that other NGOs can emulate.

The TransformMAR approach can serve as a blueprint for other NGOs aiming to create lasting change. By actively participating in the Ocean Decade, NGOs can strengthen their preservation efforts and significantly contribute to broader goals of marine conservation globally. For more information, see their website at <https://www.transformar.eco.br/>.

## Building blue carbon ecosystems: International efforts and innovations



The Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO) has initiated and supported several collaborative research projects addressing Ocean Decade challenges.

ANSO is facilitating cooperation among scientists from China, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka to focus on the conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems as a nature-based climate solution. This includes mangrove ecology, geospatial techniques, social and economic science, mangrove restoration, training workshops, and community activities.

ANSO, in collaboration with the Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IOCAS), also co-sponsored a joint scientific survey in the West Pacific Ocean, leading to the endorsed Decade Project [Health of Ocean under Multiple Ecosystem Stressors \(HOMES\): Sustainability of the Maritime Continent](#).

ANSO has also promoted cooperation among its member countries on marine microplastic pollution, the threat it poses to ecosystems and biodiversity, and its impact on health. For example, a joint scientific expedition entitled “Coral Triangle” involved multiple scientific research institutions from countries including China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Papua New Guinea.

This expedition, supported by IOCAS, the Marine Research Centre of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences, the University of the Philippines, the University of Papua New Guinea, and other scientific research institutions, systematically investigated the current distribution status and the types of marine microplastic pollution in the region, revealing potential impacts on marine fish and shellfish biosafety and providing a theoretical basis for ensuring food and biosafety.



© HOMES.\*

Additionally, microorganisms that degrade common plastics were screened to develop “enzyme weapons” with high degradation activity, reducing plastic pollution and providing technical support for the prevention and control of microplastic pollution in the Coral Triangle.

These ANSO projects serve as examples of potentially replicable initiatives that NGOs could become involved in to address similar issues in other regions around the world. By adopting and adapting these models, NGOs can promote sustainable practices and foster international cooperation in their local contexts. Additionally, these projects highlight the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, combining scientific research with community engagement and policy advocacy to create comprehensive solutions.

Following [UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science](#), ANSO encourages and supports data sharing under the ANSO platform. The ocean data collected with ANSO's support is shared on the [IOCAS database](#) with open access to the public.



## Leveraging the power of youth to lead in the protection and restoration of our planet's ocean and waterways: EarthEcho International



[EarthEcho International's](#) mission to build a global youth movement to protect and restore our ocean planet directly seeks to “restore society’s relationship with the ocean” through the activation and mobilization of young ocean leaders.

To advance its mission, EarthEcho has developed a portfolio of work focused on a youth-led approach to ocean conservation called the EarthEcho Ambassadors. Working to address several of the SDGs, Ambassadors range in age from 14–22. They collaborate with and learn from a network of EarthEcho’s partner organizations and their peers to build momentum around critical ocean conservation issues in their communities. Working alongside partners, many implementing Ocean Decade Actions and Projects, EarthEcho Ambassadors receive training, support, and funds to launch and execute grassroots initiatives focused on mobilizing their communities with a current focus on five critical issue areas: (1) High Seas Treaty/Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ); (2) Marine Protected Areas; (3) Blue Carbon; (4) Plastics Pollution; and (5) Local Waterway Health. Through education and outreach on the importance of ocean restoration, engagement in ocean policy and advocacy, and direct marine conservation efforts, Ambassadors provide a key voice advocating for a healthy ocean, a voice that is historically excluded from decision-making. Ambassadors are equipped with subject matter expertise in their respective issue area through relationships with policymakers and NGOs who are experts in their respective fields. Likewise, the EarthEcho Ambassador model builds capacity for those partners in reaching and supporting audiences under the age of twenty-five. The integration of strategic partners and a connected youth audience drives impact on a global scale.

EarthEcho supports capacity-building collaborations with NGOs involved in the Ocean Decade, including [Peace Boat US's Youth for the SDGs initiative](#) and network programmes like the Ocean Decade [Early Career Ocean Professional \(ECOP\) Programme](#).



© EarthEcho.\*

Through the collaboration with Youth for the SDGs, youth have had the opportunity to evaluate water quality in dozens of coastal communities and document that information through EarthEcho’s global online database. Each cohort of Youth for the SDGs provides a snapshot of water quality throughout their journey. This provides the opportunity for EarthEcho to support continued efforts in their communities or collaborate with Youth for the SDG’s young leaders to lead water improvement or protection efforts in those communities later. Through these types of collaborations, EarthEcho has grown both their applicant pool for Ambassador programs and their GenSea network.

GenSea, a community of young ocean advocates from over 100 countries connected digitally for year-round networking, learning, and collective ocean action, continues to expand and diversify through collaborations with organizations leading the work of the Ocean Decade. The most powerful element of EarthEcho’s Ambassador programmes lies in the opportunity to engage young people as not just the hands and feet of ocean restoration but, more importantly, the hearts and minds of the movement to restore our ocean. This investment of young people in the initiatives that they champion is key to building a durable conservation movement that can move with the speed and audacity needed to transform the future. A future where young people are engaged authentically in “the science we need for the ocean we want”. EarthEcho’s partnership approach to facilitating pathways for youth to engage with the network of Ocean Decade entities demonstrates an accessible opportunity for NGOs to participate in the Ocean Decade.

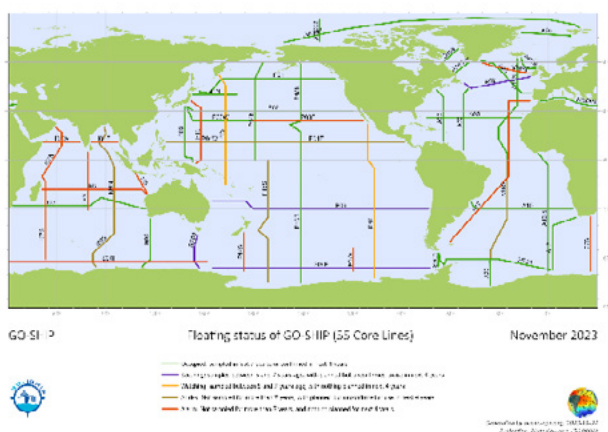


## Monitoring our ocean: Gathering decadal data for global collaboration



The Global Ocean Ship-based Hydrographic Investigations Program (GO-SHIP) is an international programme investigating long-term (decadal) changes in ocean heat content, carbon uptake, acidification, circulation, and other parameters throughout the global ocean. Ten nations contribute ship time to this effort, and fifteen nations are represented on the scientific committee. And, [GO-SHIP Evolve](#), an endorsed initiative of the Ocean Decade, enhances the collection of biological and ecosystem data revealing trends and variability in crucial indicators of global ocean health.

GO-SHIP is a part of the [Global Ocean Observing System](#) (GOOS) sponsored by UNESCO-IOC, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), and the International Science Council (ISC). It is a major contributor to the World Climate Research Programme's (WCRP) Climate Variability and Predictability Experiment (CLIVAR) and the International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project. Addressing Ocean Decade Challenge 7 (Sustainably expand the Global Ocean Observing System) and Challenge 8 (Create a digital representation of the ocean), GO-SHIP contributes to global monitoring, mapping, and identification of observational gaps throughout the global ocean by conducting comprehensive water column measurements along designated hydrographic transects across the world's ocean to investigate temporal changes in physical and hydrographic conditions.



© GO-SHIP.\*

GO-SHIP cruises routinely provide training and capacity building opportunities for oceanography students and ECOPs, uniting scientists, organizations, and projects globally.

NGOs benefit from access to valuable data, opportunities for collaboration and capacity building, and the ability to contribute to global efforts to understand and address ocean-related challenges. For example, the International Council of Associations for Science Education ([ICASE](#)), an [NGO in official partnership with UNESCO](#), supports GO-SHIP's capacity-building efforts by linking their international network along coastal communities near GO-SHIP research expeditions and enhancing educational efforts in secondary and tertiary schools through GO-SHIP data and research summaries. NGO opportunities include:

- **Advocacy and outreach:** By aligning with GO-SHIP, NGOs can amplify the programme's message and promote the importance of long-term ocean monitoring efforts. This advocacy can help secure public and political support for continued funding and expansion of GO-SHIP partnerships and similar initiatives around the world.
- **Expertise and capacity building:** Many NGOs have expertise in specific areas relevant to ocean research, such as marine conservation, climate policy, or community engagement. By collaborating with GO-SHIP, NGOs can contribute their knowledge and skills to enhance the programme's impact. NGOs can also support capacity-building efforts by providing training opportunities that include GO-SHIP data and research summaries for scientists, technicians, and students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Data utilization and innovation:** NGOs often work on projects that require access to high-quality data and scientific expertise. GO-SHIP data can support NGOs' research, modelling efforts, and policy advocacy initiatives. Additionally, NGOs can help identify innovative ways to use and visualize GO-SHIP data to communicate scientific findings to a broader audience, expanding global priorities related to developing ocean literacy in primary, secondary, and tertiary educational environments, as well as across all sectors of civil society. See the [2024 GO-SHIP A13.5 Expedition Log](#) for information about the impacts of a recent GO-SHIP cruise.

# 7.

## What's in the Ocean Decade for my NGO?



NGOs can play a crucial role in supporting and advancing the goals of initiatives like GO-SHIP Evolve, EarthEcho, ANSO, TransforMAR, and SeaTies through their resources, expertise, advocacy, and outreach efforts. In return, NGOs can benefit from access to valuable data, opportunities for collaboration, and the ability to contribute to global efforts to understand and address ocean-related challenges.

Through advocacy and outreach, expertise and capacity building, and data utilization and innovation, NGOs can contribute to ocean literacy on a global scale, while

leveraging diverse expertise, resources, and networks, fostering collaborative solutions, and maximizing impact on pressing global challenges. By leveraging existing networks, engaging with local stakeholders, and supporting capacity-building efforts, NGOs can enhance their outreach and educational activities, contribute to policy development at local, regional, and international scales, and promote ocean literacy through broad efforts to understand and protect the ocean.

In other words, NGOs are essential catalysts for ocean literacy, advocacy, and collaborative research.

## Opportunities for collaboration

The Ocean Decade creates a space for connections, sharing of experience, and developing partnerships at national, regional, and global scales. Much of its added value is based on the dense network of entities capable of coordinating and supporting existing Decade Actions as well as new participants through [National Decade Committees](#), [Decade Collaborative Centres \(DCCs\)](#) and [Coordination Offices \(DCOs\)](#). Additionally, Ocean Decade Communities of Practice bring together diverse stakeholders working on similar themes.

NGOs are welcome to connect to these bodies and contribute to Communities of Practice, voluntary groups of endorsed Decade Actions that work on similar themes (e.g. Ocean Decade Challenges or more specific focuses) or in similar geographies (e.g. major ocean basins). These enable Decade Actions to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas to collectively fulfil the objectives of the Ocean Decade. The Communities of Practice are led by Decade Actions and supported by the corresponding DCC or DCO when available.

**TIP: As soon as your Decade Action is endorsed, make sure to identify and join a relevant [Community of Practice](#) to share experience and extend your NGO's network.**

In particular, the DCO for [Connecting People and Ocean](#) will create synergies among the very diverse stakeholders involved in ocean literacy. NGOs are welcome to engage in existing coordination mechanisms and consider creating new NGO-specific collaboration and networking mechanisms at multiple levels (nationally, regionally, and internationally) that can complement their existing networks.

The Ocean Decade coordination framework facilitates connections among NGOs and fosters new multi-stakeholder collaborations. This increases the [co-design of Decade Actions](#) at national and international levels with as many stakeholders as possible, including research programmes, universities, decision-makers, and broader civil society.

By participating in the Ocean Decade, NGOs gain support from these various stakeholders and influence their agendas, enhancing and challenging science objectives with diverse perspectives and needs. Depending on their capacity and reach, NGOs can either initiate and lead Decade Actions or participate in Decade Actions led by scientific or academic institutions or other stakeholders.

NGOs can also benefit from the capacity development initiatives that take place throughout the Ocean Decade. Launched in 2023, the [Ocean Decade Capacity Development](#) Facility engages in a matchmaking role to assess the needs of the various participants and facilitate the creation of products and trainings to meet these needs. NGOs participating in the Ocean Decade are welcome to share their expertise as well as their needs with this Facility and through NDCs and DCCs.

Also, if your NGO is offering capacity development products and activities, please reach out so that we can see how these can be disseminated to more broadly benefit the Ocean Decade community.

**TIP: The Ocean Decade is a great opportunity to benefit from a supportive environment, become inspired, develop your capacity, and find partners to complement your talents.**

# Recognition and influence

Participating in an endorsed Decade Action can enhance the visibility and credibility of your NGO while strengthening its connection with the ocean science community and policy decision-makers.

We encourage you to reach out to your [National Decade Committee](#) as soon as possible to take full advantage of this opportunity to influence national and international agendas for the Ocean Decade.

## Support with data and knowledge management and sharing

The Ocean Decade has recognized from the outset the critical importance of strengthening the management and sharing of ocean data and knowledge. This effort supports efficient scientific research, enhances ocean literacy, and informs policy and dialogue among the various stakeholders and with the public.

An [Ocean Decade Data & Information Strategy](#) has been developed with the vision to “develop by 2030 a trusted, inclusive and interconnected ocean data and information system that is actively used for decision-making to support sustainable management and that also allows for new data sources, information networks and solutions to be integrated as the Ocean Decade needs evolve.” The Ocean Decade supports the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) principles to enhance the accessibility of ocean data.

This vision is supported by the DCOs for [Data Sharing](#) and [Ocean Observing](#). These DCOs provide guidance to all Decade Actions and can assist participating NGOs in sharing data and information with the Ocean Decade community and the stakeholders. They can help identify the appropriate repositories for sharing or obtaining raw and processed data and establish guidelines and minimum standards to ensure data comparability across NGOs and regions. Additionally, NGOs have identified areas in need of development for data generation and sharing, including:

- Downscaled global datasets and projections, combined with on-site data, to understand dynamics at a finer scale.
- Interdisciplinary analyses to better assess vulnerabilities and the feasibility of solutions (e.g. social acceptability, financial feasibility).
- Inclusion of grey literature and Indigenous and local knowledge to provide crucial information and perspectives not readily accessible.
- Development of data-sharing tools and open data platforms to ensure these data are circulated and widely available.
- Ensuring information is understandable and usable by non-scientists, translating data into easily understandable content/tools and plain language (e.g. dynamic and interactive maps, serious games, virtual reality) to better foster knowledge appropriation.

# 8.

## The Journey Ahead



Having a Decade Action endorsed and joining the Ocean Decade community is the beginning of an exciting journey. It's time to consider the lasting impact your NGO can have on ocean science, its intersection with policy and society, and the broader sustainable development agenda.

**Seizing the opportunities for collaboration:** We invite you to participate in Communities of Practice, collaborate with National Decade Committees and Decade Collaborative Centres to find support, develop capacity, and connect with new partners. The Ocean Decade aims to help your NGO develop strategic activities and co-design Decade Actions to achieve “the science we need for the ocean we want”.

**Strengthening the visibility and voice of NGOs in the Ocean Decade:** Let's work together to enhance the role of NGOs and civil society in the Decade. We encourage you to contribute to the momentum by inspiring and empowering other NGOs. Share your Ocean Decade experiences within your network. Reach out to the Decade Coordination Unit, National Decade Committees, and decentralized coordination structures to share your experience and achievements. This will promote your NGO and increase the visibility of NGOs within the Ocean Decade. For example, collaborate with your NDC to organize national webinars for local and national NGOs interested in teaming up nationally and internationally. The annual Ocean Decade Progress Report will include a special focus on NGOs, with your contributions. Share your information with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and respond to UNESCO-IOC calls to contribute to Ocean Decade reports. Help us identify NGOs that may be under-represented in the Ocean Decade and help them to join the Decade.

**Identifying priorities for NGOs:** Working with NDCs and DCCs provides an opportunity to help define the direction of the Decade, based on your specific needs. Connect the Ocean Decade with communities and consider their needs. The Ocean Decade welcomes contributions from NGOs working with Indigenous Peoples, small-scale fishers, and local communities. In addition to the global ambitions for each Decade Challenge from the [Vision 2030](#) process, regular discussions with NGOs could outline thematic priorities and targets. This will help NGOs identify areas where they can contribute to the Ocean Decade.

The framework of the Ocean Decade can catalyze collaborations between NGOs around these issues, allowing them to develop their ideas for action. NGOs can create synergies between the Ocean Decade and various global agendas (e.g. UNOC, climate, biodiversity, cities) where they are active. Thematic priorities could reference the priority topics identified by civil society as part of the Ocean & Climate Platform's "[Call to All the Voices](#)" [consultation](#) in preparation for UNOC2025 which align with SDGs (e.g. sustainable fisheries and food security; science; marine protected areas; pollution, and other topics including the high seas, the deep sea, synergies between conventions; finance; shipping; and human rights-based approaches to conservation and development).





**Walking the talk of the Ocean Decade:** Inclusive ocean science promotes equity and gender balance. By collaborating with organizations and movements that share knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and by recognizing their traditional knowledge as a valuable source of guidance for ocean conservation, we can ensure a more holistic approach to marine stewardship. The Ocean Decade provides a platform to advance human rights, inviting all voices to participate, creating new spaces to welcome rightsholders, and enhancing the visibility of NGOs that support them. This collaborative effort aims to ensure that the perspectives and contributions of all communities are integrated into ocean conservation strategies.



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