



Ocean Literacy as a Pillar of Sustainable Tourism: Building Capacity Among Island Communities and Marine Tourism

Professionals

Elsie Gabriel

Founder Young Environmentalists

Programme Trust / Ocean School India

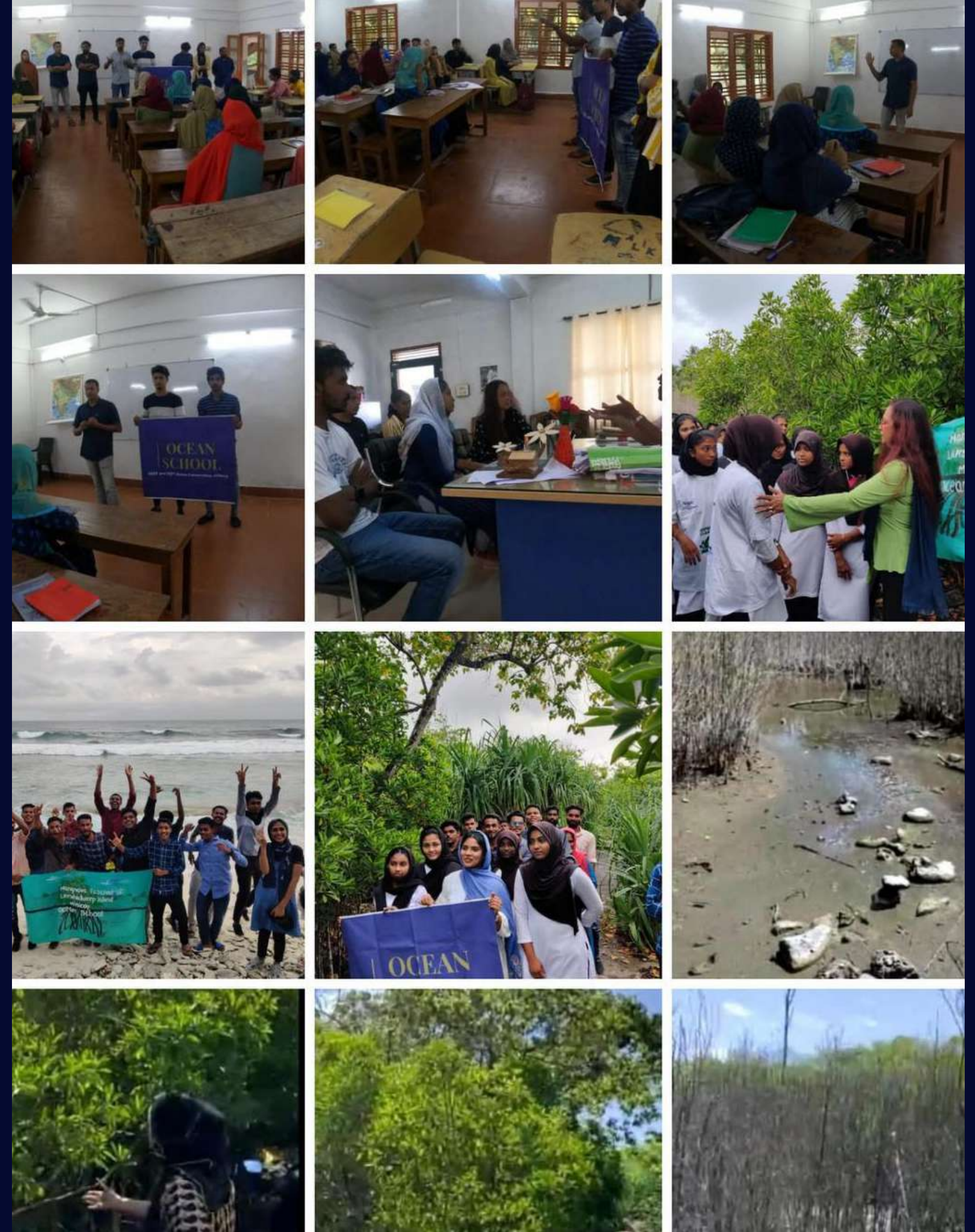
Introduction

Ocean literacy is the understanding of the ocean's influence on us—and our influence on the ocean. For island nations and coastal communities whose livelihoods are intimately tied to the sea, this knowledge is not only vital for conservation, but for sustaining tourism. Scuba divers, water sports operators, and indigenous islanders must be empowered with ocean literacy to ensure responsible marine tourism, protect biodiversity, and strengthen blue economies.



Overview & Significance

- UNESCO and UNEP emphasize the importance of ocean literacy for achieving SDGs. Research shows it improves responsible behavior in marine tourism. Indigenous knowledge, when integrated with marine science, enhances local conservation strategies.



Methodology

Locations: Lakshadweep, Goa, Mumbai

Participants: 120 Tourism University

**Indigenous Students ,100 divers, 25 Surfers,
fishermen and 100 locals**

Methods: Surveys, Focus Groups, Interactive
Field Workshops

Frameworks: UNESCO Ocean Literacy, GSTC
Tourism Criteria



Presentation of Results

85% showed improved marine
ecological knowledge

60% adopted eco-friendly practices

40 % increase in adopting
sustainable tourism in hospitality
curriculum

Local heritage integrated into
tourism narratives



Discussion and Implications

- Ocean literacy connects science and culture, empowering communities to lead sustainable tourism. It fosters climate resilience, ethical tourism, and community-based marine



**When science meets stories
from the sea, and elders
teach the tides, we empower
a new generation of ocean
tourism ambassadors
through ancient history —
informed, inclusive, and
rooted in both data and
heritage. Participants more
comfortable with familiar
local elders and experts.**



Key Takeaways

1. Ocean literacy enables balance between economic growth and marine conservation.

2. Combining traditional and scientific knowledge enhances sustainable tourism outcomes.

3. For the islanders/indigenous

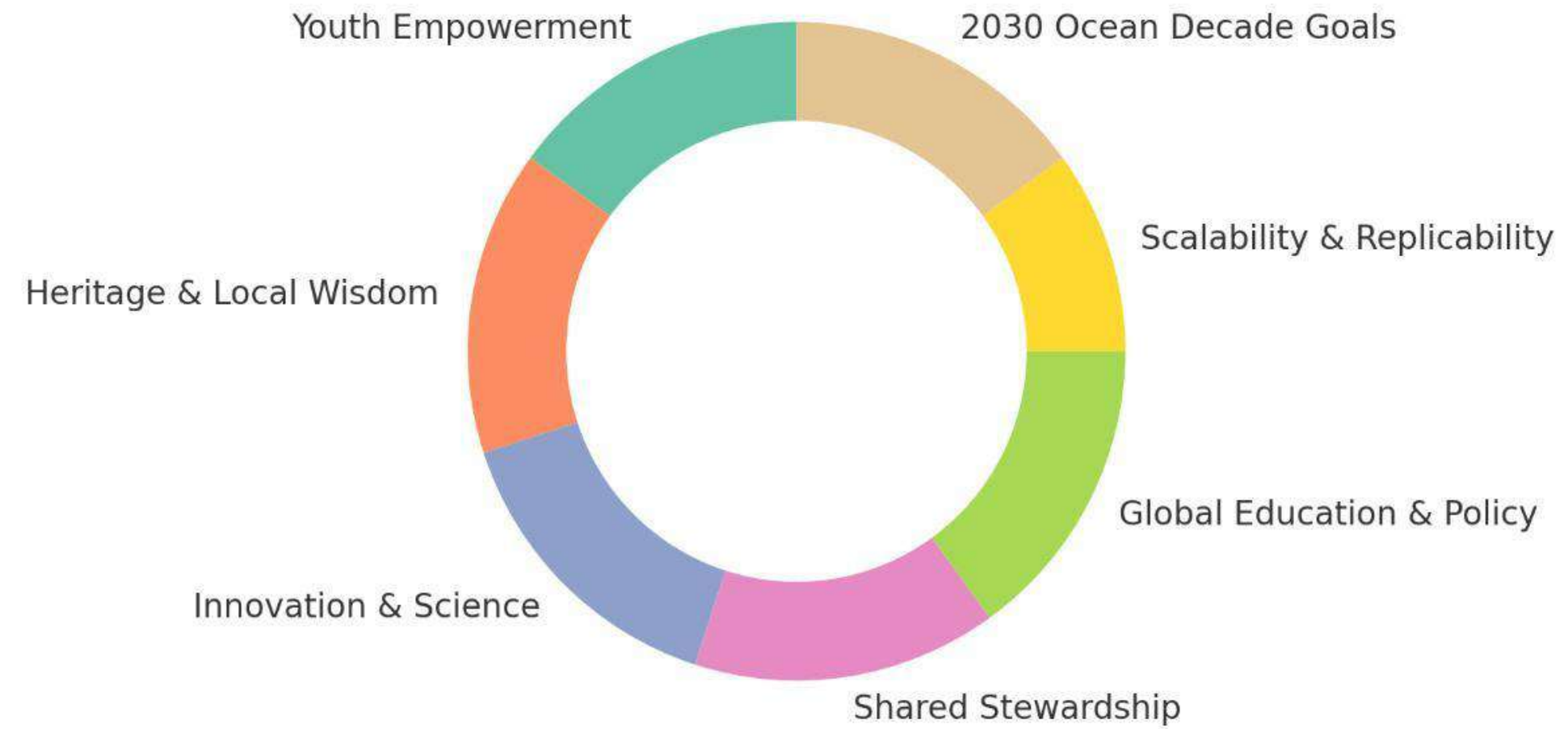
people by the indigenous people



Empowering youth through ocean literacy encompassing sustainable tourism modules across curriculums, disciplines not only enriches their education and career enhancements but ensures that local voices shape tourism policies and future-proofs coastal /island economies with sustainability and equity at the



Synergy for Resilient Coastal Futures



Empowering youth and communities with this synergy-integrated knowledge ensures resilient coastal futures rooted in heritage, innovation, and shared stewardship. This is replicable and scalable. Involving global education departments and governments to adopt sustainable tourism in academia as a policy. To meet the 2030 Ocean Decade goals we need all



Minicoy Islands



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To

Mrs. Elsie Gabriel
Founder Young Environmentalists Programme Trust
UNESCO Green Citizen,
Glen Heights Powai Mumbai

Subject-Sustainable Ocean Tourism and Ocean Literacy courses in Government college of Arts & Science Kadmat, Lakshadweep

Madam,

We Thank you for conducting the Sustainable Tourism Initiative and Ocean Literacy Project in our college. It is our pleasure to welcome you as our Honorary Consultant at the Government College of Arts & Sciences Kadmat Lakshadweep Islands.

The faculty and students gratefully utilised this time to collaborate with you on projects related to Capacity Building of English Language, Sustainable Ocean Tourism, Cruise Tourism and Ocean Literacy to enhance our university education and community service programs.

We look forward to working together to enhance capacity building for students and the institution infrastructure improvements.

Best regards,



Dr. Smitha P Kumar
Principal

Dr. Smitha P Kumar
PRINCIPAL



Global Tourism
Plastics Initiative



Global Sustainable Tourism Council

Ocean Literacy Project
Young
Environmentalists
Programme Trust



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Elsie Gabriel is founder of Ocean School India and a contributing member of the Venice Declaration on Ocean Literacy. Elsie Gabriel is advocating for the integration of ocean literacy into education policies to equip youth with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue careers in ocean sciences and contribute to ocean conservation, thereby protecting our planet.

UNESCO Green Citizen- Ocean Literacy, Plenary Speaker at UNIC 2022, UNFCCC COP panelist, NOAA, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, #Women4Climate, Maharashtra Climate Desk MCAPC, Consultant Lakshadweep Action Plan Climate Change, Ambassador for India Ocean Quest Global International, Founder Young Environmentalists Programme, National Coordinator Oceans- Climate Reality Project, Founder Oceans School India. Elsie is a post graduate PG Island Development and Biodiversity IIEE, Distinction Gold certified Environment Educator CEE India with Masters in Social Science, Education Honours Degree Loreto House Kolkata. Life Member Ocean Society of India and UNV Ambassador for India Ocean Quest Global International. An award winning environmentalist, climate change consultant advocate, global speaker trained and certified by former Vice President of USA Al Gore in Rio Brazil South America. Researching on anthropological ocean communities and Traditional Knowledge. PADI certified Advanced diver, HSA certified diver, with certified expertise in Environment law and Mass Communications, Climate change mitigation and ocean education. Alumni of Harvard Business School Leadership for Senior Executives, USA. Elsie is also the Vivekananda International Relations Peace Awardee for Ocean Literacy, Global Peace Ambassador awarded by the Workhardt International Foundation. World Women's Congress Awardee. National Winner Kerala Sustainable Tourism, Awardee of the Women's Achievers Award by the Mayor of Mumbai. Post her Spiritual Ecology certificate Australia she authored her book Get Out Get Going Outdoors while writing for the Time's of India- launched by the Governor and Mayor of Mumbai. Presently leading the Ocean Literacy Project in Indian Academia, researching on Ocean plastics, Climate Crisis and Youth Involvement, Powai lake Mumbai and indigenous Communities. Board of Directors PHSA USA having launched Accessibility Sustainable Ocean Tourism Diving in Maldives, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman's Islands researching on divers as agents of change and important stakeholders in the Ocean Decade goal 2030 mission.



Tanya Gabrielle Satish is the CEO and Youth Ambassador of the Young Environmentalists Programme Trust. She is the project lead for the ocean, climate and environment education assessments that are conducted in academic institutions, and is responsible for overseeing policy development for processes and requirements. Tanya is also a member of the United Nations YOUNGO having participated at various international conferences. She is trained and certified by former Vice President of USA Al Gore in Rio Brazil and is a Climate Reality Leader. She says, "We are living through a climate crisis which will have the biggest impact on the younger generations, so helping children and young people understand the importance, fragility and value of the world's ocean through immersive environmental education will hopefully help them connect and want to protect its system and environment over their entire lives. Ocean literacy ensures that our future leaders and communities are equipped with the knowledge to continue the fight to protect our ocean. It is a key objective of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is to boost ocean literacy in the formal education sector and create a new generation of ocean leaders by 2030."

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Introduction to Ocean Literacy
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