

# "OCEAN LITERACIES"

## TO UNLOCK TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

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### INTRODUCTION

To unlock transformative climate solutions, children as agents of change and human rights holders need to participate meaningfully in climate change debates and decision-making processes. To that end, children need to have access to education that supports the exercise of their civil and political rights in relation to climate change and illuminates the key challenges to the protection of their human right to a healthy environment.

Environmental and climate change education, however, needs to be decolonised and contextually-relevant, supporting respectful engagement and mutual learning among diverse knowledge systems to support transformative change and ensure non-discrimination in the development of climate solutions.

### THE OCEAN-CLIMATE-NEXUS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Due to the role of the ocean in the global carbon sequestration and climate regulation, the ocean is vital for children's survival, development and wellbeing (as clarified in the UN General Comment No 26 on Children's Rights and a Healthy Environment, with a Focus on Climate Change). **Children should have greater opportunities to know about the multiple benefits of a healthy ocean for their wellbeing, and more equitable opportunities to participate in decision-making processes at the ocean-climate nexus.**

The ocean also plays a vital role in the cultural aspects of children's right to development, and is particularly important in protecting children's access to traditional, Indigenous and local ocean knowledge systems, and long-standing heritage, spiritual and cultural connections to the ocean. Ocean cultural heritage, customary fishing and navigation practices and livelihoods, can offer solutions to climate change. Climate adaptation and mitigation efforts however, generally pay unduly limited attention to culture and cultural heritage (see UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, A/77/290), and this is even more true in the case of the ocean-climate nexus. This prevents transformative change in climate change debates, which could instead benefit from the consideration of children's human rights, child-focused methods (that include art, fun and play) to explore ocean cultures and diverse knowledge systems at the ocean-climate nexus (see FIGURE 1).

In addition, climate education needs to pay specific attention to the ocean-climate nexus and its relevance for children's human rights. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their 2019 Special Report on the Ocean,

- the ocean has warmed unabated since 1970, absorbed over 90% of the excess heat in the climate system and hosts "blue carbon" ecosystems.
- The interdependence and interconnectivity between the climate system and the global ocean, including its biodiversity, must be included in any consideration of effective climate change (mitigation and adaptation) action.
- The understanding of the ocean-climate nexus is being included in 'ocean literacy' as part of the UN Decade

for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

- Ocean literacy can simply be defined as 'an understanding of your influence on the ocean, and its influence on you', or understood as a complex and adaptive concept that involves several dimensions such as awareness, access and experiences, emotional connections, and knowledge (McKinley et al., 2023).

**In this poster, we rather propose focusing on "ocean literacies" to recognise the plurality and contextual nature of ocean knowledges. There is more than one way of knowing and relating to the ocean, and this should be celebrated and acknowledged in environmental education to unlock transformative and just climate solutions.**

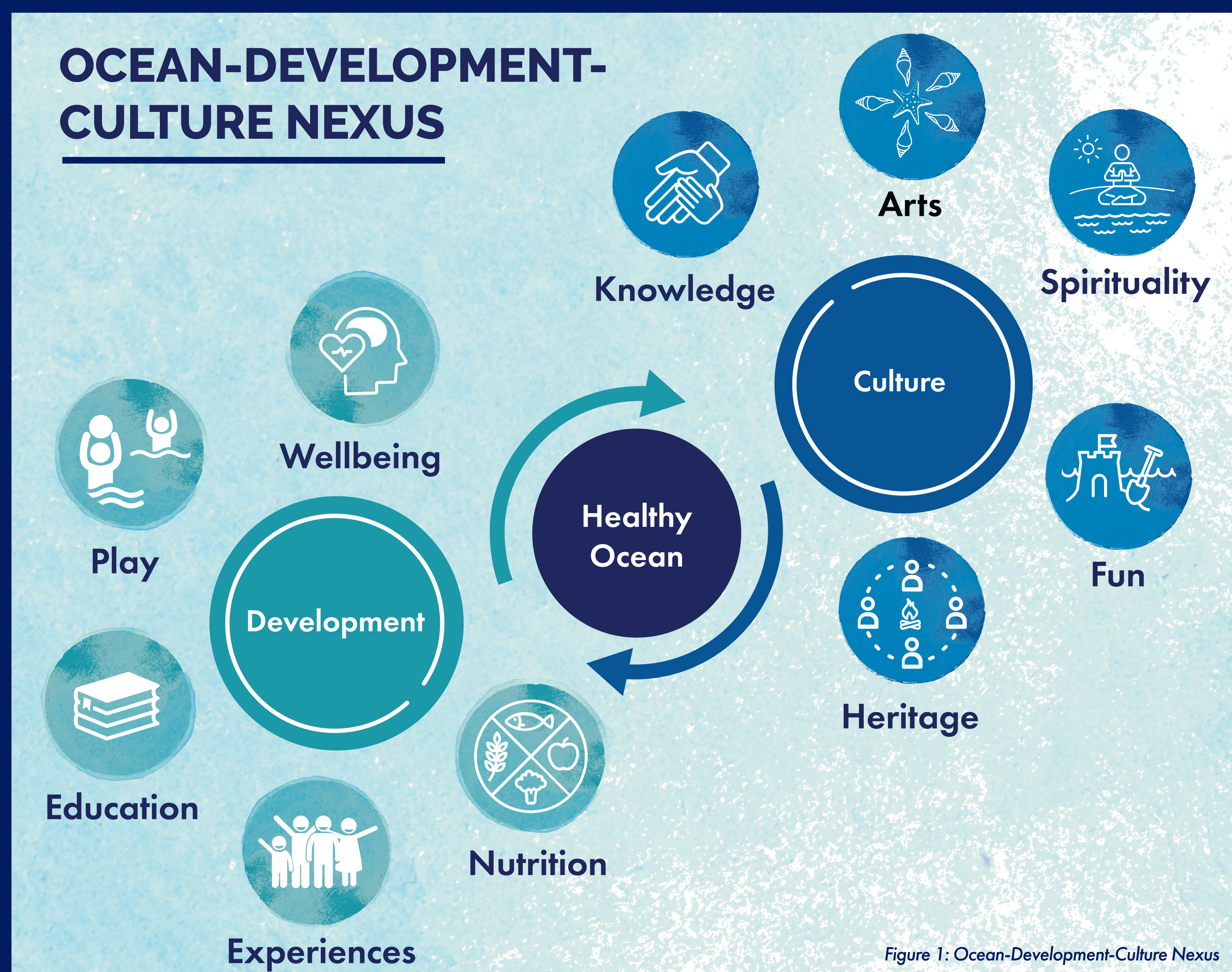


Figure 1: Ocean-Development-Culture Nexus

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OCEAN LITERACIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

**We propose eight recommendations for re-imagining ocean literacies as a way to protect children's rights to education, development, culture and a healthy environment. We look forward to engage with international organisations, States, civil society and researchers to ensure that children have an opportunity to take part in and informing transformative climate solutions:**

- Build on a **holistic** understanding of children's human right to a healthy environment, by considering the dependence of children on a healthy ocean, and the role of a healthy ocean in climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Recognise the **transformative value of a plurality of knowledge systems** in developing climate solutions, and consider what knowledge is informing environmental and climate education;
- Consider how climate change negatively impacts on ocean cultures, identities, Indigenous and local knowledges, spiritual connections, religious practices, heritage and customary livelihoods and how this in turn negatively impacts on **children's human rights to development and culture;**
- Integrate a broad spectrum of **environmental justice** issues at the ocean-climate nexus, to raise awareness about the need for climate solutions to not perpetuate **discrimination and existing inequalities;**
- **Contextualise** environmental education programmes, curricula and education processes – particularly consider how and why some children do not have equal access to environmental education, which in turn undermines their participation in the co-development of climate solutions;
- Engage in vernacular **two-way communication processes;**
- **Co-develop** education curricula for children **with children** and explore the transformative potential of fun- and play-based methodologies also for adults; and
- Clarify that children have a right to participate in co-developing climate solutions, **not a duty** to participate.

### References:

Strand, M. et al. (2023) Policy Brief: 10 key messages for reimagining ocean literacies that consider children's human rights to development and culture, <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.20522.18880>

United Nations (2022) Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki (A/77/290), New York: United Nations General Assembly, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/123/24/pdf/n2312324.pdf>

McKinley, E. et al. (2023) The evolution of ocean literacy: A new framework for the United Nations Ocean Decade and beyond, Marine Pollution Bulletin, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2022.114467>

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