**The One Ocean Hub’s**

**Written Evidence to the** **Special Rapporteur on climate change:**

**Call for inputs – Access to information on climate change and human rights**

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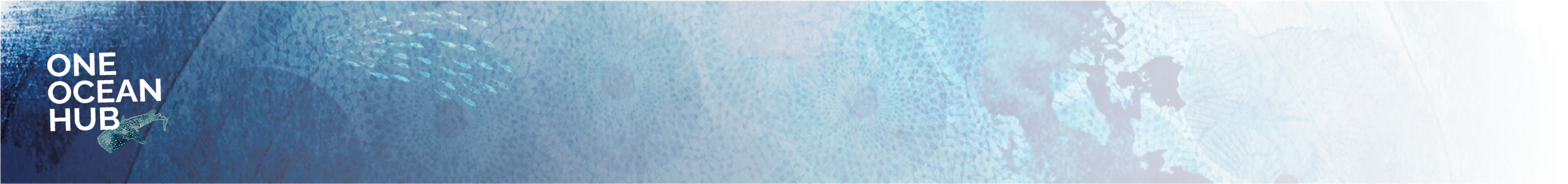
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**Background information on the One Ocean Hub**

The One Ocean Hub is an international programme of research for sustainable development, working to promote fair and inclusive decision-making for a healthy ocean whereby people and planet flourish. The Hub brings together coastal people, researchers, decision-makers, civil society, and international organisations to value, and learn from, different knowledge systems and voices in Ghana, Namibia, South Africa, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Caribbean. The Hub is funded by UK Research and Innovation through the Global Challenges Research Fund and is led by the University of Strathclyde, UK. It gathers 126 researchers and 40 research and project partners including UN bodies.

**Scope of this written submission**:

This submission focuses on:

* Information that should be collected and shared to identify and prevent negative impacts on human rights arising from climate change and climate change response measures (Question 1)
* Barriers to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change that is up to date (Question 3)
* Experience in, and examples of, the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business (Question 6)

1. **Information that should be collected and shared to identify and prevent negative impacts on human rights arising from climate change and climate change response measures**

* Essential information on the scale and dimension of climate change loss and damage of tangible and intangible cultural heritage should be collected and shared to prevent negative impacts arising from both climate change and climate change response measures. One Ocean Hub’s research in Africa and the South Pacific demonstrates that “loss and damage caused by climate change should also be viewed from a cultural perspective. Climate change destroys lives, livelihoods, culture, traditions and heritage,”[[1]](#footnote-1) identities and self-pride. Impacts of climate change on cultural heritage posed direct challenges to children’s access to traditional, Indigenous and local ocean knowledge, and long-standing heritage, spiritual and cultural connections to the ocean.[[2]](#footnote-2) Increasingly, the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are being recognised and valued to strengthen climate change resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. Cultural practices and intergenerational knowledge have a large role to play in this movement.[[3]](#footnote-3) The role of research and innovation in protecting cultural heritage and intergenerational knowledge transmission is paramount as we need a coherent methodology which mixes science with phenomenological understanding for obtaining reliable information, keeping an inventory on loss and damage to cultural heritage, and monitoring of cultural heritage to document changes.[[4]](#footnote-4) One Ocean Hub “advocates community-based art practice as an inclusive research methodology that provides an opportunity for equitable participation” of children “who are often excluded from international dialogue and debate about ocean and climate policies.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Information on climate change risks and vulnerability assessment that considers climate hazards, species sensitivity, and socio-economic vulnerability of sectors and regions will need to be collected and shared.[[6]](#footnote-6) This information can be used to identify, with stakeholders, the climate adaptation actions that are most suitable for the different regions and sectors.[[7]](#footnote-7) One Ocean Hub has conducted climate change impact assessment across fisheries sectors in Ghana, Namibia and South Africa and developed practical tools, models, knowledge systems, databases and creating the networks to enhance the capacity of small-scale fishers and local communities to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change.[[8]](#footnote-8) From Professor Showman’s research on local vulnerability assessment in Namibia and South Africa we learn about the importance of communities including children and young peoples’ voices and knowledge about threats and stressors, their observations, experiences, perceptions of change, feasible and appropriate adaptation strategies at the local level, and support needed.[[9]](#footnote-9) Hub research in Ghana underscored that dwindling fish stocks due to climate change and other pressures such as [illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8sok7blfwM) practices, have increased the vulnerability of children, particularly girls in fishing communities. [Kyei-Gyamfi, 2022](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3058-5831) reported on a ‘[fish for sex’](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X08000223) phenomenon, whereby girls whose parents cannot guarantee food security for their household offer sex to fishermen in exchange for fish. This phenomenon has increased the potential for contraction of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as teenage pregnancy, school drop-outs, and poverty levels in coastal communities.
* Obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of climate change and human rights will need to be made widely available to various stakeholders including children. Child friendly version of national and international legal conventions, rules, guidelines and codes on climate change and human rights to explain the concepts of climate change and obligations of States and businesses in this context of climate change in an easily understandable manner and language is needed to ensure children’s meaningful participation.

1. **Barriers to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change that is up to date**

* The lack of recognition of children’s [right to be heard](https://brill.com/view/journals/estu/38/3/article-p545_6.xml?ebody=pdf-67975) in national law and policy-making processes as well as international negotiations posed significant challenge for children to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change.[[10]](#footnote-10) Hub research by Golo and co-authors has founded that there is a lack of adequate effort to research and appraise children climate change needs, especially in coastal communities, and how to uptake these needs in local and national climate change policies. [[11]](#footnote-11) Despite “the growing data and advocacy about the impacts of climate change on children and children’s and young people’s demands to address these impacts also in international processes to protect the marine environment, the international law of the sea and its multilateral fora currently offer little to no space for children’s human rights and voices.”[[12]](#footnote-12)
* One Ocean Hub research has underscored the lack of proper monitoring in the implementation of laws and often the exclusion of communities who are marginalised but most dependent on the ocean including children contribute to inadequate access to information.[[13]](#footnote-13) To protect children’s human rights from the negative impacts of climate change and climate change response measures, there is a need to strengthen legislative and governance accountability mechanisms.
* Language barriers are a hindrance to accessing up to date information on human rights and climate change. Insufficient translation and language support during local, national, regional and international policy processes restricts children and other stakeholders from meaningful participation in decision making processes. Decision-making bodies and processes should ensure that “access to information in different languages and modalities, roundtable discussion formats instead of information sessions, involving adults skilled in multimodal and creative engagements with children, and ensuring that the process is built on two-way communication where the aim is to learn from each other and develop best practices according to different contexts and lived experiences.”[[14]](#footnote-14)
* As noted in the previous section, policy, legal, and regulatory complexity could serve as a barrier for children to participate in national and international ocean-climate-human rights processes. Capacity building and training is needed to ensure children's understanding of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks on ocean-climate change-human rights that impact them.
* Insufficient access to internet or digital devices and online platforms hindered access to participation. With growing attempts to democratise national and international processes through introduction of online modalities, children, particularly those who are from low-and-middle income countries and/or low-income families will need to be supported to gain access to internet and digital devices. This action is needed to ensure equal representation of children across geographical distribution and classes. One Ocean Hub researchers in Ghana and Namibia for example have facilitated online participation of representatives of children such as [Camila Awo Dzidzor](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pXnMY-jQcU&t=14s) from Keta, a coastal fishing community in Volta Region of Ghana and [Alutha Both](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkYveUEZWOM) from South Africa as speakers at the first Children pavilion event 'Advancing human rights standards in nature-based solutions: lessons from land to sea' during Climate COP27.

1. **Experience in, and examples of, the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business**

The One Ocean Hub’s research sheds light on experience in, and examples of, the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business.

* Hub researchers based at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, Dr Georgina Yaa Oduro and Dr John Ansah and news on [Ghanaian Times](https://www.ghanaiantimes.com.gh/tidal-waves-sweep-away-homes-at-agavedzi-salakope-in-ketu-south/) by Kafui Gati noted how [tidal waves and increase in sea level](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCPn_UmcAR4&t=472s) due to climate change have washed away essential infrastructure in some Ghanaian communities, such as schools and homes.[[15]](#footnote-15) In order to address the problem posed by sea level rise, the government has built flood defence walls. Research by Dr John Ansah from the University of Cape Coast reveals that the development of flood defence walls to protect coastlines from sea level rise was done without consultation with small-scale fishers and their communities. Consequently, this adaptation measure deprived some artisanal fishermen of their livelihoods due to the resulting reduction in opportunities to operate their beach seine and bring canoes ashore for maintenance and further added to the tension between different fisheries stakeholders in Ghana.[[16]](#footnote-16) In Ghana, where fishing is a major source of livelihoods, such circumstances contribute to children’s food insecurity and create a condition to push children to work as “support workers on fishing vessels, exposing them to hazardous working conditions and depriving them of educational opportunities.”[[17]](#footnote-17)
* Hub research in South Africa reveals that children, young people, Indigenous Peoples and local communities are often excluded from decision making on marine protected areas (MPAs).[[18]](#footnote-18) Current practices of public engagement around MPAs mostly focus on pre-determined options presented in a non-accessible way, sometimes in language that communities are unable to understand.[[19]](#footnote-19) Therefore, even when communities are invited to the decision-making table, they may not express themselves effectively.[[20]](#footnote-20) The Hub’s Empatheatre team in South Africa has used restorative public storytelling to address issues of fairness and inclusion in the creation and management of MPAs through a new theatre-based research project titled “Umkhosi Wenala” (is Zulu for “Festival of Abundance”). The project is co-developed with 13 young artists (Mbazwana Creative Arts) in northern KwaZulu-Natal region to address issues of fairness and inclusion.[[21]](#footnote-21) The success of MPAs is highly dependent on good stakeholders’ engagement.[[22]](#footnote-22) This requires the ability to create education and awareness on the subject of MPAs across all sectors of society, from children to the general public.[[23]](#footnote-23) Given the establishment of MPAs is known to be “one of the most effective ways of protecting marine and coastal biodiversity,” states should:[[24]](#footnote-24)
* draw on experience and methodologies developed within the children’s rights community, in including children in biodiversity-related decision-making;
* collect and make publicly accessible information about how biodiversity loss may harm children, including at the ocean-climate nexus;
* equip children to understand the effects of climate change-related decisions on their rights;
* provide information on biodiversity health issues that is physically accessible, understandable and appropriate to children’s age and educational level;
* closely consider the discriminatory impact of biodiversity loss on Indigenous children, children in local communities, and girls, through their meaningful engagement;
* recognise, protect and realise the demands of child environmental human rights defenders, including child ocean defenders;
* collaborate effectively with, NGOs, fishers and coastal community members in the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

1. Senia Febrica and Lisa McDonald, “Hub highlights connections between art, culture, heritage and ocean governance at a UNDP Archipelagic and Island States event, 14 December 2023, <https://oneoceanhub.org/hub-highlights-connections-between-art-culture-heritage-and-ocean-governance-at-a-undp-archipelagic-and-island-states-event/>; Georgina Yaa Oduro and John Ansah, “Mitigation of climate change and heritage vulnerabilities in coastal communities in Ghana.” Climatic Change (under review/forthcoming); Stuart Jeffrey, “Indigenous knowledge and inclusive ocean governance: A case study from Vanuatu,” <https://oneoceanhub.org/indigenous-knowledge-and-inclusive-ocean-governance-a-case-study-from-vanuatu/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mia Strand et al. (2023) Protecting children's rights to development and culture by re-imagining "ocean literacies". International Journal of Children's Rights Vol.31:4, https://brill.com/view/journals/chil/31/4/article-p941\_008.xml [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid*; British Council, “The British Council Strategic Literature Review: Climate Change Impacts on Cultural Heritage,” November 2023. Available from https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/british-council-strategic-literature-review-climate-change-impacts-cultural. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. British Council, “The British Council Strategic Literature Review.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stuart Jeffrey, “Indigenous knowledge and inclusive ocean governance: A case study from Vanuatu,” https://oneoceanhub.org/indigenous-knowledge-and-inclusive-ocean-governance-a-case-study-from-vanuatu/. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Townhill, B., Harrod, O., Painting, S. et al. Climate change risk and adaptation for fisher communities in Ghana. J Coast Conserv 27, 45 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11852-023-00967-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See for example StrathE2E Model, <https://outreach.mathstat.strath.ac.uk/apps/StrathE2EApp/>; Lynne Shannon. (2020). Exploring Temporal Variability in the Southern Benguela Ecosystem Over the Past Four Decades Using a Time-Dynamic Ecosystem Model. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2020.00540>; Coastal Justice Network, “What Is the Coastal Justice Network?,”https://coastaljusticenetwork.co.za/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Prof Merle Sowman (University of Cape Town, South Africa)’s presentation at One Ocean Hub’s webinar “Oceans and Climate Change: Impact and Adaptation” 30 November 2020 co-organised with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the UN-Nippon Fellows and Alumni. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sophie Shields et al. (2023). “Children’s Human Right to Be Heard at the Ocean-Climate Nexus.” The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Lawhttps://brill.com/view/journals/estu/38/3/article-p545\_6.xml?ebody=pdf-67975 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Harrison Golo, Sulley Ibrahim, and Bolanle Erinosho (forthcoming). “The Impact of Climate Change on Child Rights to Food and Health in Coastline Communities in the Volta Region of Ghana.” *Journal of Environment & Development.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Shields et al. “Children’s Human Right to Be Heard at the Ocean-Climate Nexus”; *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Merle Sowman et al. (2021). “Unmasking governance failures: The impact of COVID-19 on small-scale fishing communities in South Africa.” *Marine Policy* Vol. 133, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104713>; Merle Sowman and Jackie Sunde. (2021). “A just transition? Navigating the process of policy implementation in small-scale fisheries in South Africa.” Marine Policy Vol. 132, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104683. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Sophie Shields et al. (2023). “Children’s Human Right to Be Heard at the Ocean-Climate Nexus.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Georgina Yaa Oduro and John Ansah, “Mitigation of climate change and heritage vulnerabilities in coastal communities in Ghana.” Climatic Change (under review/forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Intervention made by Dr John Ansah (University of Cape Coast, Ghana) at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN-One Ocean Hub Workshop on Small-Scale Fisheries, 14 April 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John Kwame Boateng et al. (2024). Reconciling conflicts between cultural beliefs, and human rights standards in coastal communities of Ghana: preserving cultural rights and promoting sustainable fishing practices. Cogent Social Sciences, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2340427 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. One Ocean Hub, “Changing understandings and engagements with ocean-dependent communities – Empatheatre,” 2024, available from <https://oneoceanhub.org/changing-understandings-of-and-engagments-with-ocean-dependent-communities-empatheatre/>. Last accessed 20 May 2024; Philile Mbatha. (2022). "Unravelling the perpetuated marginalization of customary livelihoods on the coast by plural and multi-level conservation governance systems." Marine Policy, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105143. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Dylan McGarry, Elisa Morgera and Laura Merilainen, “Fairer and more inclusive marine protected areas through restorative public storytelling,” 15 December 2022, available from <https://oneoceanhub.org/fairer-and-more-inclusive-marine-protected-areas-through-restorative-public-storytelling/>. Last accessed 20 May 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The Commonwealth, “Marine protected areas,” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid;* Sophie Shields et. al. (2023). “Children’s Human Right to Be Heard at the Ocean-climate Nexus,” *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, <https://brill.com/view/journals/estu/38/3/article-p545_6.xml?language=en>; Mia Strand et.al. (2023). Protecting Children’s Rights to Development and Culture by Re-Imagining “Ocean Literacies”. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 31(4), 941-975. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-3104000 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This section is drawn from Elisa Morgera and Sophie Shields, Policy Brief: Integrating the General Comment 26 on Children’s Rights and a Healthy Environment in the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, 5 February 2024. Available from <https://oneoceanhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Policy-Brief-integrating-the-General-Comment-26-on-Childrens-Rights-.12.02.24_2-.pdf>. Last accessed 20May 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)