

OSC students Champion Ocean Conservation in Slingshot Challenge



Students from The Overseas School of Colombo's Wonder Lab, together with project mentor Hiruni Senarath Dassanayake.

Three Overseas School of Colombo (OSC) students entered the Slingshot Challenge, a global initiative inspiring youth ages 13-18 to tackle environmental issues. Supported by the National Geographic Society and the Allen Family Philanthropies, the challenge encourages creative solutions through a one-minute video submission. The students, participating via OSC's Wonder Lab, used National Geographic's learning strategies to investigate ocean conservation. Their project, "Sri Lanka's Acidification Exposed," explored the understudied issue of ocean acidification around Sri Lanka using advanced technology. "Through research, we explored how rising carbon dioxide impacts marine life and coastal communities," said Alessandro Nereo Francovich.

The students raised awareness by creating visual stories inspired by National Geographic Explorer Erika Larsen's Story of Place approach. "We were motivated by

our passion for science and desire to create positive change,” added Vasilissa Munasighe.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program at The Overseas School of Colombo provides students with an opportunity to gain knowledge through hands-on experimentation and real-world applications in the science subjects. “The inspiration came from the ocean acidification lab experiment we did in tenth grade. We decided to explore the issue in depth and take action. Thanks to the science department’s support, we were able to turn an idea into a reality,” said Haocheng Tang.

“We are very fortunate to have a meticulous and well-rounded science program at OSC. By participating in the Slingshot Challenge, students get to combine science, creativity, and conservation to address a real environmental challenge affecting their local environment and restore our ocean. As students conduct their own research to find solutions, they become scientists themselves,” said Hiruni Senarath Dassanayake, project mentor and Science Lab Technician at The Overseas School of Colombo.

After receiving solution ideas from across the globe, the National Geographic Society is now reviewing all Slingshot Challenge submissions, and a panel of experts will select a small number to receive funding of USD 1,000, USD 5,000, or USD 10,000 to further their journey. Last year, the Slingshot Challenge reached a global audience, attracting submissions from 96 countries, nearly four million social media engagements, and participation from around 16,000 youth and 5,000 educators. The National Geographic Society will announce this year’s award recipients on May 12, 2026.