



# Strategic Plan 2020-24





# Executive Summary

In 2020, EarthRights International will celebrate its 25th anniversary.

This strategic plan reflects those 25 years of experience working with frontline communities around the world to assert power and demand corporate and governmental accountability for respecting human rights and the environment. It presents our vision of a world in which the worst impacts of climate change are averted, earth rights defenders are able to effectively carry out their work, and corporations are held accountable for the harms they cause to communities and the environment.

We are in the midst of a full-blown climate crisis in which urgent action is needed to hold corporations accountable for climate damage and to support front-line communities resisting new fossil fuel projects. Civic space continues to shrink and attacks and criminalization against earth rights defenders are intensifying. And impunity for corporate human rights abuses remains largely unchecked.

We believe EarthRights adds critical value to global movements in these areas through strategic litigation, our training programs and the Mitharsuu Center, and our growing global campaigns and communications. We will continue to bring innovative corporate accountability cases in the United States and will support such cases in other countries. We will also seek to address the human rights challenges posed by Chinese companies in the regions we work. We will implement a “protect, prevent, reveal, redress” strategy





in support of earth rights defenders that will seek to challenge the root causes of threats against them. And we will support earth rights defenders who are at the front lines of resistance to fossil fuels and pushing toward more sustainable alternatives.

To leverage our strengths, respond to the challenges described above, and achieve our vision we have identified three broad global goals for the next five years:

- ▶ **Global Goal 1 – Climate Justice and Accountability:** Fossil fuel companies and governments are held increasingly accountable for climate-related damages to frontline communities and for respecting communities' rights vis-a-vis climate-damaging fossil fuel, hydro, and agribusiness projects.
- ▶ **Global Goal 2 – Earth Rights Defenders:** Criminalization and attacks against earth rights defenders are reduced and legal protections strengthened in countries where EarthRights works.
- ▶ **Global Goal 3 – Corporate Accountability:** The legal and social accountability of corporations for respecting community rights, including to land and a healthy environment, are increased in regions where EarthRights works.

To achieve these goals, we will work to deepen our collaboration across our training, legal, and campaigns teams, increase our focus on gender and social inclusion, strengthen support for the alumni of our training programs, and build our capacity to carry out local, national, and global campaigns and advocacy. We will explore opportunities for influence in new regions. All of these efforts will be linked to an increased emphasis on monitoring, evaluating, and learning from our work.





## Our Vision

EarthRights International (EarthRights) stands with communities in pursuit of a world in which every person lives with the dignity of justice and human rights on a planet where precious resources are shared equitably and preserved for the future.

EarthRights is a team of community organizers, campaigners, and legal strategists who challenge powerful corporations, governments, and banks that violate peoples' rights and destroy our planet for profit. We are part of a global network of earth rights defenders who aim to protect our planet for the future.

We seek a world in which catastrophic climate change is averted, corporations and governments respect human rights, and earth rights defenders freely and effectively carry out their work without fear of criminalization, harassment, or attack in defense of human rights and the environment.

Our vision reflects a world confronting a tipping point on the global climate crisis, and one in which unrestrained corporate power and influence result in human rights violations in local communities and against those who seek to protect them.

Our vision also reflects our unshakable faith in the power of communities and movements to shift power and make real and lasting change. It reflects our belief in EarthRights' ability to support this change through our training of community activists, our global campaigning and advocacy, and our strategic legal work. For EarthRights, the current global scenario is not cause for despair but for renewed energy to stand with our global civil society partners to demand justice and accountability.



# EarthRights

## in 2020:

### Our DNA

In 2020, EarthRights celebrates its 25th anniversary. This milestone is cause for celebration but also reflection — on who we are, what we do, where we've been, and where we're headed. Organizationally, we often reflect on what we call our "DNA": What is it that makes us who we are? What drives us to do what we do, and why?

Answers to these questions reflect EarthRights' diversity and that of the three global regions in which we work. There are **core values** we share that underlie all of our work (listed in Annex 1) and guide how we operate as an organization. **Protecting the rights of frontline communities** is at the root of what we do. We are a global NGO, but our purpose is always ultimately to support efforts by communities and the movements that support them to protect and defend their rights. Our approaches may vary, as may the degree of connection to communities themselves, but serving their interests is what drives us.

A key part of who we are organizationally is our three-pronged approach to making change: **training** of community and legal activists, **strategic legal work** in defense of human rights and in favor of corporate accountability, and **campaigns** to promote systemic governmental and corporate policy change. EarthRights has done groundbreaking work in each of these areas. We believe our ability to work in these three areas make a unique contribution to the global movement to protect human rights and the environment. We have recognized, however, that we can do more to integrate our work and thereby increase our collective influence. Deepening this integration is a key challenge we will set for ourselves as we implement this strategic plan.

We recognize that to achieve our objectives we must work in close partnership with civil society organizations around the world. Therefore, a critical part of who we seek to be is a reliable partner and ally. We want to be counted on as an organization that freely offers advice and support to those who seek it and that can help drive coalitions to achieve collective results. Where possible, we seek to build bridges among organizations and help to avoid competition that can undermine effectiveness.

Central to our core organizational values are our commitments to **diversity**, **equality**, and **social inclusion**. We want to be an organization that reflects the diversity of the world in which we live and the communities we serve and that provides opportunities for people of all backgrounds to join us in achieving our global goals.

Our work seeks to shift power to advance equity for the people with whom we work. We recognize that divisions may arise among communities on ethnic, religious, economic, and racial grounds, but we know we are stronger when we bridge those divides. In many parts of the world, for example, **women's leadership** has been undervalued or ignored completely. Strengthening the influence of women community leaders and activists is essential to shifting power in favor of frontline communities. We are proud of our work in support of women community leaders and earth rights defenders.

Above all, EarthRights is driven by a desire to have **positive impact** with communities to collaborate in defense of human rights and the environment. This strategic plan sets out a vision for what that means, although its exact





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definition will vary from one context to the next. While a desire for results has always been fundamental to EarthRights, we can do more to document that significance and hold ourselves accountable. In that light, this strategic plan embodies a renewed organizational commitment to embed monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes into all our work.

## What We Offer and What We've Learned

We are an organization that uses **community-based strategies** to defend human rights and the environment. The definition of community and the degree of our engagement may vary, but our work always comes back to supporting the efforts of frontline communities to protect their rights and their environment. We amplify the stories of our clients as part of our global advocacy, but we do so ethically, seeking permission and telling their stories the way they want them to be told.

Throughout its history, EarthRights has made **strategic litigation** a core part of our strategy. The organization was founded around a legal case against Unocal (a California-based petroleum exploration corporation) for human rights violations in Myanmar. Over time, the nature of our litigation work has evolved as the nature of corporate human rights abuse has changed. We have brought lawsuits against corporate actors and organizations such as the World Bank Group that previously considered themselves immune from liability. And increasingly, we've taken on legal defense cases against corporations trying to silence the voices of activists. As the human rights implications of the climate crisis have emerged, we have devoted more resources to holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for the damages it has caused.

We combine the power of the law and the power of people. We approach our legal work from a broad **movement-building** perspective – cases that can help galvanize larger changes in power and policy. We will continue to bring innovative cases that promote transformational change. As “first movers” in the human rights and environmental field, we take risks in our litigation choices, bringing cases based on innovative legal theories and spotlighting emerging problems. We know that to maximize our reach, legal cases should be linked from the beginning to effective **communications and campaigns strategies**. We've also learned that complex, multi-year litigation, even when successful, can be draining on our relatively small legal team. Therefore, we seek to explore interventions that are more focused, but still strategic and supportive of communities.

One of our greatest strengths as an organization is the global network we have helped build. Our **earth rights defenders network** includes our partners in frontline communities, the activists we have trained in the Mekong and the Amazon, our allies in human

rights and environmental organizations, and our staff and alumni. As civic space continues to close around the world, we will continue to strengthen the collective identity of this network as a resource for those who are under threat.

Strengthening the power of frontline communities to assert their rights and defend their interests has always been a fundamental part of EarthRights' mission. For this reason, for more than 20 years we have run **activist and legal training programs** at the EarthRights School in the Mekong region, through our Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute, and beginning more recently at the Latin American Indigenous Legal Seminar in the Amazon region. These trainings have been transformational experiences for many of our alumni who have gone on to create positive change in their communities. We've learned that there is a global demand for this kind of activist training. Through the development of the **EarthRights School Global** program we will share our learning and training methodologies with other organizations and regions. The **Mitharsuu Center for Leadership and Justice** is a Platinum LEED building opened in 2017 to provide staff, students, partners, and alumni a regional hub to safely learn and collaborate. Critically, we have learned that providing ongoing strategic **support to our alumni networks** enhances the overall impact of the organization and we are seeking ways to do this effectively.

From the corridors of power in Washington, D.C.; Lima, Peru; Bangkok, Thailand; and Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar; to small villages in the Amazon and the Mekong, EarthRights supports **local-to-global advocacy and communications** work that seeks to shift power from corporate elites to frontline communities. We work with community leaders and organizers to open access to influential decision-makers.



We've learned that linking global advocacy to our legal and training work enhances our overall effectiveness. We've also learned that **strategic external communications** across

all types of media—and making a corresponding level of investment in our communications capacity—is critical to our success.

## The World in 2020

Our vision of the world we want to see and the organization we want to be is set against our analysis of the world as it currently exists. It's a world in which we are now in a full-blown **climate crisis** and rapidly running out of time to take meaningful action to avoid catastrophe. It is a world in which **civic space continues to shrink** and **criminalization and attacks against earth rights defenders** are intensifying. And it is a world in which **impunity for corporate human rights abuses** remains largely unchecked. Despite this grim scenario, we see important signs of hope and progress. These are what drive us as an organization and inspire us to join with our partners and allies around the world to keep up the struggle.

### The Climate Crisis

The climate crisis presents one of the greatest global threats to human rights the world has ever faced. The realization of nearly all human rights depends on addressing climate changes from which many communities are already experiencing significant repercussions. Critically, the **fossil fuel corporations** that have contributed disproportionately to the climate crisis must be held accountable for the damage they have caused. Pressure needs to increase on these entities until a massive global shift is made away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy sources. To accelerate this shift, governments and corporations must **stop constructing new fossil fuel projects** that do not adequately account for the climate damages they will cause. Communities on the front lines of climate change must be supported in their **organized resistance** and must receive compensation and assistance in **adapting their lives and livelihoods** to the new reality of the climate crisis.

As protectors of forests and critical ecosystems, **indigenous peoples** are at the heart of the struggle against climate change. Protecting their **land rights**, particularly against **fossil fuel** and large **hydropower** projects and **deforestation**, must be a critical component of an effective climate change strategy.


Although essential for addressing climate change, renewable energy sources can carry their own human rights risks. Many renewable technologies rely on the continued extraction of natural resources, notably the mining of “**green minerals**” such as lithium and cobalt. In the future, the success of a low carbon economy cannot be measured by greenhouse gas emissions alone. It must avoid repeating the same human rights problems associated with traditional extractive industries.

### Shrinking Civic Space

As democratic norms have retreated and corrupt corporate interests have become dominant, global civic space has continued to shrink. **Deep-rooted corruption** has become the “operating system” in countries where governmental institutions only serve the elites at the expense of broader populations. Desire for control of land and other natural resources has helped drive this corruption. In countries across Latin America, Asia, and Africa, this corruption has led directly to attacks and repression against earth rights defenders who have fought back against these interests on behalf of their communities. Hundreds of such people are murdered each year defending their land and the environment.







Threats against earth rights defenders come in many forms, but they are often driven by corporations. In Honduras and Colombia, for example, corporations have relied on **paramilitary groups and death squads** to silence activists. In the United States, corporations have **manipulated the judicial system to penalize dissent**, filing abusive “strategic lawsuits against public participation” (SLAPPs) against their critics and lobbying state legislators to adopt laws that criminalize protests of oil pipelines and other corporate assets. **Women activists** have been on the frontlines of social movements and have been targets of harassment, stigmatization, and violence.

As the global movement to save the planet from the worst effects of climate change intensifies, communities and activists on the **front lines of opposition to fossil fuels** are coming under increasing pressure and attack. There will be a growing need to ensure that such movements are legally and physically protected and can carry out the **nonviolent direct actions** that will be increasingly necessary to force governments to address the climate crisis.

## Unchecked Corporate Power

A key component of this dire global scenario is the deep **power asymmetry between corporations and communities**. Corporate power has effectively seized substantial control of governments in many countries, including the United States, severely limiting the voices of those whose interests might diverge from those of the elites. Corporations have succeeded in manipulating judicial systems, making it easier to use the courts as tools of repression while frontline communities struggle to seek justice. As communications and advocacy increasingly take place online, so too have corporations and governments begun to use sophisticated digital tools to conduct surveillance of activists and spread misinformation that undermines social movements.

In the United States, corporate lobbies have worked to limit access to courts and remedies for victims of corporate human rights abuse. They have undermined laws, such as the Alien Torts Statute, that organizations such as EarthRights have used to seek remedies. Corporate power has repeatedly undermined efforts to establish pro-human rights laws and regulations, even on anti-corruption issues such as transparency of revenue payments by extractive industries to governments. For this reason, there is still no overarching set of regulations on corporations and human rights, no **human rights version of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act**, for example. Where laws exist, the federal government has limited resources for enforcement. There is, rather, a global proliferation of voluntary codes and “business and human rights” initiatives that, while in some cases are creating positive dialogue spaces, have not served to fundamentally improve human rights conditions on the ground.

It’s important to note that the **nature of corporate-related human rights abuses has changed** in the past 25 years. Gross human rights violations by western companies, such as Chevron in Ecuador, Shell in Nigeria, and Unocal in Myanmar are no longer as prevalent as they once were. Lawsuits and campaigns by organizations such as EarthRights have undoubtedly contributed to the decrease in corporate-driven extrajudicial killings, torture, and war crimes. Still, human rights abuses in the corporate sector remain a serious issue, and in some ways an even tougher challenge. Abuses that are more difficult to detect, such as environmental degradation, health threats, and harassment of women, remain widespread.

**Chinese and smaller Western companies** (such as Canadian mining juniors) with a lower public profile and thus less susceptibility to public pressure have become among the most egregious perpetrators. When multinational corporations are involved in abuses, they are often shielded from liability by a network of shell companies, subsidiaries, and complex corporate structures.

## Opportunities for Local Action with Global Influence

The global scenario discussed above is tough and discouraging. But there are signs of hope. We find these signs in many places, particularly in the inspiring work of the activists who come to the **EarthRights School** and participate in our other training programs. We are renewing our commitment to support them and to help track the progress and effects of their work. In the United States, despite a political environment that is largely hostile to the causes of human rights and the environment, in 2019 we were successful in our **Supreme Court case against the International Finance Corporation**. This decision against an institution previously considered above the law has opened the door to greater accountability to affected communities.

In **Peru**, we have challenged the dominant power of the country’s mining industry and questioned the constitutionality of the industry’s contracts with the national police – a key channel of repression against communities.

In **Myanmar**, a country that will be among the hardest hit by climate change, we have supported successful community efforts to block major coal projects and have supported a national dialogue on renewable energy. These efforts come amid growing civil society organizing and action on climate change that may be finally forcing corporations and governments to address the crisis. As an organization working on the frontlines of human rights and the environment, we believe we can make a strong contribution to these efforts.



## Our Problem Analysis

As noted earlier, the problems we seek to address are rooted in a steep asymmetry of power between global actors (corporations, governments, and financial institutions) and communities. This power imbalance is upheld by legal and governance systems that favor powerful interests at the expense of the rights of local communities and the environment. They have enabled and even incentivized behavior by corporations that have consistently and knowingly prioritized profits over human rights and the environment. Doing so allows them to hide behind the legal and judicial systems they helped create in order to avoid accountability. Governments

and financial institutions consistently support these corporate interests, providing them with access to communities and their natural resources, and weakening protections for people who live and work in these communities and rely on the land, water, air, and safe working conditions.

These problems are not new. They are being felt now with increased intensity by communities and activists as democratic norms are rolled back, sophisticated technologies enable new forms of repression, and climate change intensifies competition for control of scarce land, water, and other natural resources.

## Our Theory of Change

EarthRights combines the **power of law** with the **power of people** through **local-to-global collaboration and networks**. Embedded within our theory of change is a firm conviction in the importance of strengthening the power of community leaders and activists, advocating for the law as a tool for justice rather than repression, and using the force of public opinion to drive positive social change. Corporate actors carry vast power in most parts of the world and it is only through collaboration that we can shift power to the people.

Our Theory of Change includes allies who contribute to global movements for justice and accountability. The application and specific elements of the theory of change will vary by the context in which we are working. For this reason, we emphasize flexibility and adaptability in our tactics and actions that enable us to influence positive action even as political dynamics may change and evolve.

We believe our actions and those of partners and allies supported by millions of people around the world can bring about change. The graphic in Annex 2 sets the theory of change within the longer-term change process we seek to engender.

## Our Vision for 2024

Building on our global and regional context analyses and our assessment of where we as an organization can be most influential, EarthRights seeks to achieve the following three global goals by 2024 as key steps toward the realization of our global vision.

The goals are interconnected by definition and by design. Progress toward one will support progress toward the others. And just as the realization of all human rights will increasingly depend on addressing climate change, so too will climate become a common thread linking the goals and work of the organization. While the goals are designed to be long-term and aspirational, their underlying objectives and action steps are intended to be concrete and measurable. We will establish specific metrics for tracking our progress and holding ourselves accountable. The goals will serve as the basis for our annual planning processes, which will integrate our work across our regional offices and functional teams. This reflects our renewed organizational emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The goals are also broad enough to allow adaptability as we pursue them in each geographical context and to enable flexibility as political circumstances change.

- ▶ **Global Goal 1 – Climate Justice and Accountability:** Fossil fuel companies and governments are held increasingly accountable for climate-related damages to frontline communities and for respecting communities' rights vis-a-vis climate-damaging fossil fuel, hydro, and agribusiness projects.
- ▶ **Global Goal 2 – Earth Rights Defenders:** Criminalization and attacks against earth rights defenders are reduced and legal protections strengthened in countries where EarthRights works.
- ▶ **Global Goal 3 – Corporate Accountability:** The legal and social accountability of corporations for respecting community rights, including to land and a healthy environment, is increased in countries where EarthRights works.



# Strategies Towards our Global Goals

Each global goal is tied to a related strategy. To help us connect and integrate our work, we will engage these interconnected strategies across the organization's thematic and geographical teams. Each of these strategies contains specific change objectives and action steps that will contribute to our Global Goals. Additional objectives and steps towards each goal will be included in our annual operating plans.

## Strategy 1: Push for Climate Justice and Accountability for Frontline Communities

**EarthRights' strategy:** To achieve our goal, we will employ a strategy that (1) pushes for legal accountability for fossil fuel companies and governments for the climate-related damage they have caused to frontline communities and (2) supports these communities in their efforts to resist climate-damaging fossil fuel projects, large hydroelectric dams, and agribusiness projects that contribute to deforestation and loss of community lands. Our strategy includes training community leaders and activists on the impacts of climate change and climate justice and accountability strategies supporting communities to defend their rights against the impacts of resource extraction related to green technologies.

### Achieving the goal:

- ▶ Litigation provides remedies to frontline communities for climate damages and for historic harms associated with fossil fuel projects.
- ▶ Through EarthRights training programs, including the EarthRights School and Seminario, frontline communities and activists have increased access to information about climate damages, participate effectively in national and regional dialogues on the sustainable energy transition, and protect their rights vis-à-vis climate-damaging projects, deforestation, and extraction of minerals used for renewable energy technologies.
- ▶ Frontline communities in the Amazon and Mekong regions effectively defend their rights vis-à-vis climate-damaging hydro-electric and fossil fuel projects.
- ▶ Civil society coalitions help frontline communities defend their rights against the impacts of coal mining.

## Strategy 2: Defend Earth Rights Defenders

### EarthRights' strategy:

To achieve our goal, we will implement the "Protect, Prevent, Reveal, Redress" strategy set out in our 2018 publication *Fighting Back: A Global Protection Strategy for Earth Rights Defenders*. In particular, this includes (1) providing legal defense to earth rights defenders who have been criminalized, physically attacked, abused, or otherwise prevented from working to defend communities, land, and the environment; (2) proactively working to address the root causes of attacks on ERDs, including corruption and irresponsible land and fossil fuel development and repression from security forces; and (3) strengthening national and global legal and policy standards for protections of ERDs and civic space.

### Achieving the goal:

- ▶ To Protect, space is provided to defenders to strategize, train, and collaborate:
  - ▶ Mitharsuu Center for Leadership and Justice serves as a hub for training, strategizing, and reflection on issues facing earth rights defenders.
  - ▶ The influence of the alumni networks of the Earth Rights School and the Seminario is strengthened through legal, campaigning, and coordination support.
  - ▶ EarthRights School Global program supports training of defenders in more regions.
  - ▶ Increased focus on supporting women earth rights defenders, including at the EarthRights School and Seminario.
- ▶ To Prevent, policies and legal protections for defenders are strengthened:





- ▶ Legal and policy protections against criminalization and SLAPP suits against defenders are strengthened in countries where we work.
- ▶ Gender-based strategies are implemented to encourage participation and provide protections to women defenders.
- ▶ Guidelines are disseminated on defending earth rights defenders against criminalization and attack.
- ▶ Earth rights defenders have access to strengthened global rapid-response capacity to provide communications, financial, and other support when under threat.
- ▶ To Reveal, we will expose global threats against activists opposing fossil fuel industries and other interests:
  - ▶ Reports are published challenging the legality of contracts between state security forces and corporate interests.
  - ▶ Reports are published on human rights violations linked to overseas investments in the Amazon and Mekong regions.
  - ▶ Reports are published on corporate links to paramilitary activity.
  - ▶ Documentation is produced on global threats against activists opposing fossil fuel projects.
- ▶ To Redress, we will provide legal and advocacy defense in support of earth rights defenders and seek remedies for abuses:
  - ▶ Legal and advocacy defense are provided directly and via coalitions to defenders in the countries where we work.
  - ▶ Transnational human rights cases seek remedies and prevent future abuses by corporations and governments.

### Strategy 3: Demand Corporate Accountability

**EarthRights' Strategy:** To achieve our goal, we will continue to take on strategic litigation in the United States and in other countries that leverage broader influence in the global corporate human rights accountability movement. Our litigation targets will include corporations, governments, and international financial institutions. We will continue to use the Foreign Legal Assistance Act to support corporate



accountability litigation outside the U.S. We will campaign at the national and global levels to promote laws and policies that strengthen accountability of corporations for human rights by expanding access to courts and remedies for victims of corporate human rights violations. This includes renewed efforts to promote corporate human rights accountability legislation in the United States.

In recognition of the prominent role Chinese and other non-Western companies play in human rights issues in many countries where we work, we will explore an influencing strategy that could include bringing litigation against a Chinese company, developing Chinese-focused materials for our training programs, promoting community dialogue through our Community Developed Operational Grievance Mechanism (CD-OGM), and potentially partnering with Chinese lawyers and activists on cases, campaigns, and trainings.

#### Achieving the goal:

- ▶ Earth Rights School includes curriculum for training on legal and campaigning strategies vis-vis Chinese companies.
- ▶ Legal cases are filed to hold corporations accountable for abuses.

- ▶ More co-counsel relationships are developed to expand our reach and impact.
- ▶ Coalitions are formed to hold Chinese corporations accountable for human rights and environmental abuses.
- ▶ Partner organizations outside the U.S. are supported through Foreign Legal Assistance actions.
- ▶ Progress is made toward adoption of U.S. legislation to strengthen corporate human rights accountability.
- ▶ Constitutionality of contracts between public security forces and private companies are challenged in national courts.
- ▶ Legal defense is provided to indigenous and local communities to defend their land rights against natural resource extraction and other corporate interests.
- ▶ Community-led grievance mechanisms (CD-OGM) are implemented in the Mekong region and new locations.

## Operational Goals to Support Our Strategies

To achieve our goals and objectives, we recognize the need to strengthen and/or review our operations in a number of key areas. These are (a) gender justice and social inclusion, (b) physical and cyber security, (c) monitoring evaluation and learning, (d) research and policy advocacy capacity (e) our geographic scope, (f) financial resources, and (g) international communications and decision-making. These are discussed in turn below.

### GENDER JUSTICE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

In addition to facing human rights violations and environmental degradation, many of the communities EarthRights works with also struggle with conflict driven by differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms. We understand that in order to be effective, we must work across these divides and work with many parts of communities to advance the shared need for accountability and redress of harm.

Addressing gender inequality and women's marginalization and discrimination are essential elements of effective human rights work and for shifting power in favor of frontline communities. Gender is directly relevant to each of our areas of focus (climate, earth rights defenders, and

corporate accountability). EarthRights has supported women's rights through our legal cases, support for women ERDs, and training of women activists in our training programs. We have lacked, however, a focused gender-inclusive





approach that can inform our work across the organization. To address this, the organization will integrate gender objectives into our strategies across our areas of work. The organization will also work to strengthen an internal culture of mutual respect and social inclusion across our programs and geographic regions.

**Operational Goal 1: Development of objectives on gender justice and social inclusion.**

## **PHYSICAL AND CYBER SECURITY**

In some locations, the nature of EarthRights' work can endanger the physical security of our staff. These risks are exacerbated by growing cyber threats from spyware and other technologies that are employed to surveil and threaten activists. EarthRights' management is fully committed to protecting the security of our staff and data. To help do this, the organization will work with security providers to strengthen our physical and cyber security protocols and training of staff to ensure their implementation. We will also incorporate these elements into our work with our Earth Rights Defenders network, ensuring that our protection and defense includes digital components.

**Operational Goal 2: Development and implementation of physical and cyber security protection measures.**

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)**

Monitoring and evaluating our efforts and making programming decisions based on this information is critically important for the overall effectiveness of the organization. This plan represents our renewed commitment to monitoring, evaluation, and learning. In this light, we will strengthen our MEL capacity by hiring a global MEL manager and instituting new annual planning processes that will ensure effective monitoring and accountability. Our programming decisions will increasingly be driven by information collected through monitoring processes. These efforts will be supported by the development of an overall organizational MEL system that will apply across the thematic teams and regional offices and will enable increased collaboration and co-planning. We recognize the challenges of applying monitoring and evaluation frameworks to some aspects of our legal work, which can be long-term in nature and more difficult to assess in the short and medium terms, so we will ensure that our MEL frameworks are designed to address this.

**Operational Goal 3: Development of an organizational MEL system that will include annual planning, data collection, and learning processes to inform program design and goal-setting.**

## **RESEARCH AND POLICY ADVOCACY CAPACITY**

This plan's goals and objectives depend significantly on our ability to promote legal and policy reform across our several locations. Doing this effectively requires additional human and financial resources, research, and information to inform our positioning on key issues, notably those relating to climate change. To strengthen our work in this area, we will seek to increase our policy and research capacity and develop partnerships with other organizations and academic institutions to leverage our influence.

**Operational Goal 4: Increased policy and research capacity through development of human and financial resources and partnerships.**

## **GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE**

EarthRights currently focuses its work in Myanmar, the Mekong region, the Amazon region, and the United States. We also have work on a small number in countries outside those regions, notably India and Honduras. We believe there may be opportunities to leverage our efforts in other countries and regions where the issues we work on are also important. Pursuing those prospects could enable us to increase our organizational impact overall, including in the countries where we currently work. To assess these opportunities and the potential benefits and risks of expanding our geographic scope, we will establish an internal review process to evaluate potential and make recommendations to EarthRights senior leadership and board. We emphasize that any decision to support work outside our current areas would be conditioned on that work helping to strengthen our existing work, not undercut it.

**Operational Goal 5: Produce an analysis and recommendations regarding opportunities to increase our influence by outreach to additional countries or regions.**

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

We recognize that to fully achieve our goals we will require additional resources, which we estimate to be approximately one-third above current levels across the organization. EarthRights is fortunate to be currently in a positive financial position. We will seek to further strengthen this position to ensure our long-term financial health and grow our overall resources. In particular, we will increase our engagement with individual donors and seek larger commitments from our current institutional funders. Relatedly, we are increasing our investment in our resource development staff and working to develop comprehensive resource development strategies across a wide range of potential donors, including high net-worth individuals and bilateral institutions.

**Operational Goal 6: Develop resource development schemes linked to the strategic plan and encompassing a broad diversity of potential funding sources.**

#### **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING**

Ensuring effective coordination and collaboration across the organization will require the development of new communications and decision-making protocols and the

adoption of new information-sharing technologies. This is particularly important given the risks associated with some aspects of our work and the need to ensure timely responses to issues relating to our cases, campaigns, and work with earth rights defenders.

**Operational Goal 7: Adopt and implement strengthened internal communications and decision-making protocols and information-sharing technologies.**

## **Annex 1: EarthRights International Core Values**

**Deep and Long-Term Commitments:** EarthRights aims for change that is fundamental and systemic. We do not expect it to happen rapidly. And we realize it requires a long-term commitment to our vision as well as to the communities with whom we work. We believe that the strength of our work comes from deep, trusting, and sustained personal connections to the communities and individuals we partner with, enabling us to more effectively serve their interests.

**Strength in Diversity:** EarthRights supports diversity as a powerful and effective force for social change. Rather than ignoring human differences, EarthRights recognizes and celebrates them as the fuel of creativity and innovation. EarthRights' staff members represent a range of not only ethnicities, nationalities, and religions, but also educational backgrounds, professional histories, and life experiences that EarthRights views as important aspects of diversity.

**Effectiveness in Integration:** EarthRights holds the core belief that we are most effective when we leverage our collective power and resources for co-powering, not only with communities, our closest colleagues and staff, but also across programs, offices, and borders. Decisions, strategies, and policies that maximize teamwork and encourage close collaboration and integration among programs are prioritized.

**More than a job:** EarthRights expects our team to strive for extraordinary effectiveness. We recognize our role in a global movement for social and environmental justice where people who are suffering abuses are affected by our work. We are aware of the gravity of our mission, knowing that these are not simply issues we are working on, and our work is not just a job.





## Annex 2: Theory of Change





EARTHRIGHTS INTERNATIONAL

[www.earthrights.org](http://www.earthrights.org)