Our Mission

EarthRights International (ERI) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that combines the power of law and the power of people in defense of human rights and the environment.

We specialize in fact-finding, legal actions against perpetrators of earth rights abuses, training grassroots and community leaders, and advocacy campaigns. Through cutting edge strategies, ERI seeks to end earth rights abuses, to provide real solutions for real people, and to promote and protect human rights and the environment in the communities where we work.

Our Mission

This page: Fishing communities living along the Mekong River are at great risk of losing their livelihoods if destructive hydropower projects like Don Sahong and Lower Sesan 2 are built.

Cover: Fishing boats in the Achuar village of Pampa Hermosa in Peru. The Achuar sued Occidental Petroleum in 2007 for oil contamination, which they alleged caused widespread health problems and deaths. The parties recently reached a settlement.
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Mae Hong Son, Northern Thailand. This region, located on the Thai-Myanmar border, is home to thousands of refugees and communities of indigenous peoples vulnerable to the earth rights abuses that accompany development projects.
Dear Friends,

As we enter our 20th year as an organization, we reflect back on the pillars that remain our goals today: amplifying local voices over corporate greed, cutting-edge legal strategies, hard-hitting campaigns, and a robust network of skilled and rabble-rousing local activists who continue to speak truth to power around the globe. From a single-room, one-computer office in Thailand, ERI has expanded its global reach to include four offices in the U.S., Peru, Thailand, and Myanmar, housing a team of sixty worldwide.

In 2014, we came together to complete an ambitious strategic plan for 2015-2019. Over the course of the next five years, we plan to build on the past 20 years of accomplishments while advancing our mission to protect and promote earth rights globally through combining training, legal, and campaigns work across our offices. Within the broad terrain of earth rights advocacy, ERI has identified six areas of urgent global concern: extractive industries, such as oil, gas and mining; mega projects, such as dams and highways; land rights and clean environments for vulnerable communities; obligations and immunities of international financial institutions; the rights and security of earth rights defenders; and climate change and climate justice. By leveraging our distinctive strengths, ERI will continue to innovate strategies within these themes, working to shift power from corporations to local communities in the Mekong, the Amazon, and around the world.

While we saw many examples of destruction in the name of development, we also celebrated significant progress for the earth rights movement. In Myanmar, as Special Economic Zones (SEZs) grow and communities are harmed by polluting industries, ERI brought recently displaced villagers from the Thilawa SEZ near Yangon to Japan to demand that JICA, the Japanese government agency financing operations in the zone, publicly respond to complaints of intimidation and indignity the villagers suffered during the resettlement process. For the first time since their land was confiscated nearly twenty years ago by the Myanmar government, the villagers used public advocacy and institutional channels to demand due process and better compensation, opening the door for communities affected by other SEZs to do the same. In the Mekong region, where development projects like the Don Sahong dam threaten to destroy the Mekong River’s ecosystems and livelihoods of villagers who depend on the river, we premiered our storytelling series Faces of Change, which sheds light on the injustices caused by these harmful projects and the earth rights defenders who fight against them. Across the globe in the Amazon, even as police shoot protesters standing up to a giant mining company in Peru, we see indigenous communities fight together against big oil. In the U.S., where corporate power is increasingly boundless due to the failure of the courts to limit it, we celebrated a settlement in our case against Occidental Petroleum for polluting the Corrientes Region of the Peruvian Amazon.

We are humbled and proud to be a part of the earth rights movement and the foundation it has given us to create a better world. Soon, we will break ground for the Mitharsuu Center for Leadership and Justice in Chiang Mai, giving the Mekong region a model for green building while serving as a meeting point of the minds and hearts pursuing a just and sustainable future for this region and for all.

As always, thank you for joining us. In solidarity,

Katie & Ka Hsaw Wa
When bulldozers and guns destroy a village in the name of development, it’s often due to decisions made thousands of miles away in a corporate boardroom or government office. We use the power of the law and the power of the people to fight alongside affected communities defending themselves.

The law has many tools, from litigation in U.S. courts and deploying large scale grassroots campaigns, to using innovative ways of collecting facts and evidence, we have done it all this year.

Kyaw Win (far right) and his family were the last household to be evicted from the Thilawa Special Economic Zone. This photo depicts Kyaw Win with his daughters Hla Hla Win and Khauk Zin Win in front of their former home.
In our case against Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum (Oxy), we are pleased to confirm a mutual settlement of the claims in the litigation. Through the newly founded Upper Corrientes Development Fund (FODAC), which the Achuar control and lead, the communities direct their own development. The 25 indigenous Achuar plaintiffs from the Peruvian Amazon have been fighting Oxy since 2007 over harm caused for over thirty years in the Corrientes River basin. Oxy contaminated the rivers and lands that sustain the Achuar’s way of life, causing death, widespread poisoning and destruction. The Oxy settlement was covered in the Guardian, the New York Times, and La República, Peru’s leading newspaper.

The Amazon

The second Apu of Pampa Hermosa in Peru. The Achuar sued Oxy in 2007 for oil contamination which they alleged caused widespread health problems and deaths. The parties recently reached a settlement.

We settled our case against Oxy.

We opposed a highway that would destroy indigenous territory in Bolivia.

We hosted inspiring indigenous women leading the climate change movement.

We challenged destructive dams in Peru.

We opposed a highway that would destroy indigenous territory in Bolivia.

We presented a brief, along with Bolivian indigenous leaders, to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) challenging a major highway project. The project threatens to cut across Bolivia’s Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), an undeveloped national park that is home to more than 12,000 indigenous peoples—three dwindling indigenous cultures—the Tsimanes, Yuracarés and Mojeño-Trinitarios—and indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. The proposed highway could cause major health effects and displacement for the communities who live in its path.

We are consulting with the regional government of Cajamarca challenging the Ministry of Mines on the Chadin 2 hydropower project. This dam is one of 24 planned in the Marañón River Basin in Peru. These dams jeopardize the biodiversity of forests and water systems that rural and indigenous people in the region rely on. Many activists who oppose the Chadin 2 project are criminalized and repressed as a result of their work. We strengthen their legal defense strategies by sharing useful information and providing valuable legal analyses.

We hosted inspiring indigenous women leading the climate change movement.

We were honored to co-sponsor a reception with incredible spokeswomen for climate justice and the protection of our environment during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Lima (COP20). Speakers included indigenous women leaders from the Huaorani and Sarayaku communities. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Bianca Jagger, Member of the Executive Director’s Leadership Council of Amnesty International USA, also spoke at the event.

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The Amazon
There was oil in the water. We didn’t know, so we kept drinking.”

Adolfina Garcia Sandi, plaintiff in the Oxy case.

A lake of contaminated water in Jibarito, an oil port in the Peruvian Amazon operated by Pluspetrol. Pluspetrol, an Argentine oil company, took over the oil concession from Oxy in 2001.

Despite our settlement with Oxy in 2013, contamination in the Amazon continues to happen.
We spearheaded the filing of a complaint in the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) against Mega First, the Malaysian developer of the Don Sahong dam. This is the first case of its kind filed with SUHAKAM.

The Don Sahong dam is being built in Laos. If completed, it will have devastating consequences for livelihoods throughout the region. Affected people spoke about their experiences and concerns over the Don Sahong dam. The filing created a wave of international attention.

We brought fisherfolk and farmers from Cambodia and Thailand to the Malaysian Human Rights Commission to demand respect for their rights.

We advocated for a more inclusive water governance model in Cambodia.

Construction of the Lower Sesan 2 and Cheay Areng dams in Cambodia are threatening indigenous communities with forced evictions and loss of their lands and livelihoods. ERI led advocacy to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cambodia on the threats to human rights and indigenous cultures posed by ill-conceived hydropower dams.

The Lower Sesan 2 dam poses a threat to the food security of fishing communities across the Mekong River Basin. We joined 17 civil society organizations from the Mekong in demanding transparency and a new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project.

We brought Southeast Asia’s brightest legal minds together.

In the 5th year of the Mekong Legal Network (MLN), we continued to support legal practitioners pursuing regional human rights and environmental cases and campaigns. We also hosted the Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute (MLAI), our annual regional training program for junior lawyers and campaigners from the six Mekong countries.

The purpose of MLAI is to share legal experience within the region and help light the public interest legal advocacy flame inside the next generation. Our eight Bertha Legal Fellows, who work with our U.S., Amazon, Mekong and Myanmar programs, also participated this year.

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The Mekong

In my childhood, I could see natural resources in real life. If the Don Sahong dam is built, those resources will vanish.”

Pheau Moeung Khun
Cambodian farmer

Youth standing in front of the Stung Treng hydropower dam, which will have devastating effects throughout the Mekong River basin.

Villagers during their visit to Malaysia to file a complaint against the Don Sahong dam developer in the Malaysian Human Rights Commission. The dam will have devastating consequences throughout the entire Mekong Region.

Sem Vorn is an indigenous woman from Kratie Province in Cambodia. Thousands like her are threatened by the Don Sahong dam, which will have devastating effects throughout the Mekong Region.

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Myanmar authorities are accused of violating international standards of relocation and resettlement as a result of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project, being developed with Japanese government funding. Displaced families report higher levels of hunger, child malnutrition, and sickness. We helped the community engage directly with investors and project decision-makers about these impacts. We submitted a complaint to the UN’s Special Procedures. We also wrote a legal analysis of the land confiscation and an evaluation of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the first phase of the project.

We held companies and investors responsible for a project that has uprooted hundreds of families.

We told President Obama that development is no excuse for abusing human rights.

Bo Bo, our Myanmar Campaigns Coordinator, met U.S. President Barack Obama with several other civil society leaders in Myanmar. He spoke about foreign investment and human rights in Myanmar. We also briefed the United Nations’ new Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, on issues associated with the Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

We conducted trainings for Myanmar public interest lawyers on human rights and environmental issues. We provided technical assistance to Members of Parliament on legal issues such as land rights and Environmental Impact Assessments.

We are working closely with the villagers to demand improved conditions and adequate compensation.

In the old place, I had 20 acres of land. That land was owned by my grandparents and my parents. Children could play and run freely. Here you see our land is very narrow space for the children to play.”

Aye Khaing Win
Displaced villager from Thilawa
Farmland begins to be bulldozed for the development of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

The Thilawa SEZ is situated 23 km southeast of Yangon and covers a total area of 2,400 hectares. This area includes six villages, home to approximately 4,313 people.

The Myanmar government has already begun evicting people from their homes in order to make room for developing the Thilawa SEZ.

“When I was farming, we were happy growing vegetables. We had regular work and income. Now I do not have any job. We did not receive compensation for our farming land.”

A resident from Phase I of the Thilawa SEZ
We sued the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), a federal agency that regulates the securities industry, on behalf of international relief and development organization Oxfam America. We are holding them accountable for failing to issue the long-delayed rules that will require oil, gas, and mining companies to publicly report the payments they make to governments. These transparency requirements will help communities in resource-rich countries hold companies and their governments accountable for the responsible management of billions of dollars in extractive resource revenues.

We are speeding up long-delayed rules for the extractive industry.

We went to the U.S.’s highest court to hold Chiquita accountable for funding terrorism in Colombia.

We filed a petition to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of families of workers and organizers. A lower court ruled that the victims’ claims lacked sufficient connection to the U.S. Our petition seeks to reverse that decision. A paramilitary group used Chiquita’s money to spread terror in the banana-growing region of Urabá, Colombia, where they killed thousands of villagers, labor leaders, and community organizers. Chiquita paid a fine to the Department of Justice, but the families of the many victims have yet to see justice.

We are exposing just how much U.S. Congress values profit over people.

The Corporate Accountability Coalition’s 2013 Congressional Report Card showed little congressional activity in favor of corporate accountability and responsible business practices. Not a single pro-accountability bill even made it to a vote. Some actions that addressed important issues regarding corporate responsibility and necessary limitations on corporate power garnered little, if any, co-sponsorship. The Report Card attempts to serve as an objective measure of Congressional efforts to protect people, not corporations, in U.S. laws and policy.

We pioneered a cutting-edge legal tool to shed light on corporate abuse around the world.

We pursued a strategy to assist public interest lawyers in other countries in obtaining information which helps their cases against corporations, through the U.S. Foreign Legal Assistance (FLA) statute. To spread the word about this useful tool, we wrote a guide that gives an overview of what the FLA is and how it could be helpful to foreign and domestic human rights lawyers, and addresses frequently asked questions. We’ve already had success in obtaining evidence to help several cases around the world, with tremendous interest in this strategy from many partners!
We are building a global network of fearless advocates with the skills necessary to challenge damaging industries and protect community land rights. This year we graduated 24 young leaders in our EarthRights Schools. They return to their homes filled with knowledge and passion to protect their communities.

We trained dozens more community members, lawyers, and judges throughout the world in our regional trainings.
This year’s EarthRights School Mekong (ERSMK) students represented twelve ethnic Mekong River communities, including from China, Myanmar, and Thailand.

We trained 12 young indigenous rights activists, land rights campaigners, film makers, and human rights lawyers.

They used theater to learn about community rights.

We joined forces to research destructive “development”.

The ERSMK students conducted fieldwork on earth rights abuses caused by cross-border investment in the region.

They will continue to collaborate as alumni to protect the rights of people in the face of destructive development projects.
The students, who come from six different ethnic groups in Myanmar, are promising advocates who campaign for issues that affect their communities, like the environmental and human rights impacts of Special Economic Zones and mines.

We trained 12 young leaders from Myanmar in human rights and environmental justice. They went to Yangon to learn how to best engage companies. This year, one month of the training program was held in Yangon to allow students a chance to establish relationships with local NGOs and alumni in order to support their future work. To gain real life experience, students met with a variety of stakeholders such as the Myanmar Center for Responsible Business, Myanmar Capital Advisor (Business for Social Responsibility), and a staff person from Coca Cola. The speakers advised students on how to best engage with companies on human rights issues.

A student from Shan State wrote about his perspective on visiting communities in Prachuap who were fighting against proposed coal power plant projects: “There were so many useful experiences from this field trip. We met village leaders who faced many difficulties and security risks because of their campaigns. I want to be an activist like P’Noi [Ban Krut leader].”

They went out of the classroom to be inspired by other successful activists. During a field trip to Southern Thailand, students met with and learned from community activists affected by the Map Ta Phut industrial estate and deep sea port, as well as leaders from Prachuap Khiri Khan province who successfully resisted two coal power plant projects.

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Mueda (ERSMK ’12) founded the Mekong Youth Assembly, bringing activists from the six Mekong countries together to campaign for ecological children’s rights. They are also training the next generation of earth rights campaigners.

Thai-Karen alumna Mueda (ERSMK ’12) founded the Mekong Youth Assembly, uniting activists from the Mekong countries to campaign for ecological children’s rights. This year, Mekong Youth Assembly members accompanied the EarthRights School Myanmar (ERSMY) students in a week-long trip to communities in Southern Thailand who have advocated for earth rights protections against an industrial estate, a deep sea port, and coal-fired power plants.

This kind of hands-on experience and relationship-building helps our students, as well as the youth from the Mekong Youth Assembly, strengthen their campaigning skills.

They equipped civil society leaders with valuable legal and campaigning tools to protect vulnerable communities.

Alumni Program organized five- and six-day workshops on land rights and mining in Yangon, Myanmar. The workshops empowered our civil society leaders working on these issues, equipping them with the legal and campaigning tools to help vulnerable communities protect their lands and environment. More than a dozen alumni joined each workshop, including three alumni from our Health and EarthRights Training (HEART), a joint program between ERI and the Mae Tao Clinic in Thailand, near the Myanmar border.

They also organized anti-dam workshops and a land grabbing protest at the 2014 ASEAN Youth Forum in Yangon, Myanmar.

They advocated for the voices of the youth to be heard.

We believe it’s invaluable to include the voices of youth in decisions that affect their future. That’s why over 20 EarthRights School Mekong Alumni formed the core team of youth activists advocating for the ASEAN Youth Movement to become a formal youth-driven institution, with full recognition from ASEAN governments. The Alumni also played an important role during the ASEAN forums to ensure that policy makers heard the voices of grassroots community members.

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They advocated for the voices of the youth to be heard.

We believe it’s invaluable to include the voices of youth in decisions that affect their future. That’s why over 20 EarthRights School Mekong Alumni formed the core team of youth activists advocating for the ASEAN Youth Movement to become a formal youth-driven institution, with full recognition from ASEAN governments. The Alumni also played an important role during the ASEAN forums to ensure that policy makers heard the voices of grassroots community members.

They also organized anti-dam workshops and a land grabbing protest at the 2014 ASEAN Youth Forum in Yangon, Myanmar.

They are also training the next generation of earth rights campaigners.

Thai-Karen alumna Mueda (ERSMK ’12) founded the Mekong Youth Assembly, uniting activists from the Mekong countries to campaign for ecological children’s rights. This year, Mekong Youth Assembly members accompanied the EarthRights School Myanmar (ERSMY) students in a week-long trip to communities in Southern Thailand who have advocated for earth rights protections against an industrial estate, a deep sea port, and coal-fired power plants.

This kind of hands-on experience and relationship-building helps our students, as well as the youth from the Mekong Youth Assembly, strengthen their campaigning skills.

Now is the time for people around the Mekong region to stand up to protect our river, our lives, our rights, and our community.

I strongly believe in our power. I strongly believe we can change the future by our hand.

So now we need to start and work together.

Mueda Nawanat
EarthRights School Mekong ’12
Khaing Myo Htun (ERSMY ‘06) was featured on Faces of Change. In 2008, he founded the National Resource for the People (NRFP), which runs workshops for community members to know and advocate for their rights.

Ham Oudom (ERSMK ‘13) was also featured on Faces of Change. After graduating, he helped one community form a human road block, which, to this day, has blocked the progress of a destructive dam.

Mueda Nawanat (ERSMK ‘12), was featured on Faces of Change. She was born in Thailand to refugees from Myanmar. She is thus considered “stateless” and was denied a university education. She fought to change that. Mueda eventually helped pass a Thai law that allows people born in Thailand before 1992 to apply for citizenship.

This year we launched a storytelling project called Faces of Change. Our goal in this series is to amplify stories that are usually silenced, to provide a space for them to be told, heard, and shared, and to generate meaningful and long-lasting dialogue and change.

These stories, documented through participatory practices and in-depth collaboration between our staff and the communities we serve, are told through a variety of mixed media including film, photography, audio, and prose.

So far we have profiled four earth rights defenders who are fighting to protect their lands, communities, waterways, and resources.
EarthRights International (ERI) is a nonprofit organization that combines the power of law and the power of people in defense of human rights and the environment. ERI is exempt from federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This Statement of Activities is excerpted from ERI’s audited financial statements, prepared by Gelman, Rosenberg & Freedman for the year ending December 31, 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue and Other Support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Grants</td>
<td>$215,300</td>
<td>$1,594,097</td>
<td>$1,809,397</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Contributions</td>
<td>134,733</td>
<td>150,709</td>
<td>285,442</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>5,938</td>
<td>4,850</td>
<td>10,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets Released from Restrictions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of Program Restrictions</td>
<td>1,861,060</td>
<td>(1,861,060)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue and Other Support</strong></td>
<td>$2,217,565</td>
<td>$(111,904)</td>
<td>$2,105,661</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td><strong>$1,206,845</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy Campaigns</td>
<td>252,511</td>
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<td>EarthRights Schools</td>
<td>292,148</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Cross-Cutting</td>
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<td>Total Program Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>201,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,859,959</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Change in Net Assets** | $(642,394) | $(111,904) | $(754,298) |

**Net Assets, beginning of year** | $3,755,001 | $2,633,929 | $6,388,930 |

**Net Assets, end of year** | $3,112,607 | $2,522,025 | $5,634,632 |

EarthRights Legal Advocacy Institute (MLAI) participants take a field trip to Mae Wang National Park, Thailand to learn about proposed hydropower projects in the area.
The world’s largest gold mining company agreed to a settlement with 14 individuals relating to alleged acts of violence at the Porgera Mine in Papua New Guinea. For decades, women and girls were brutally raped by Barrick’s security guards at the mine. At least 120 women have lodged claims of rape.

We obtained compensation from Barrick for survivors of rape.

We sued the IFC for irresponsible investment.

We are not afraid to be the first ones to try something new. How about helping the first community sue the World Bank Group in U.S. federal courts for damages caused by one of their projects?

This April, fishing communities in western India sued the IFC, the World Bank Group’s private lending arm, for harms caused by a mega coal-fired power plant.

Elmer Campos has been paralyzed since 2011 when Newmont’s armed police shot him in the back during a peaceful protest near the proposed Conga mine in Peru. A federal court ordered Newmont to turn over evidence relating to police violence against protestors. We will use this evidence to hold the parties accountable.

We forced Newmont to hand over evidence they didn’t want the world to see.
ERI’s Bertha Legal Fellows exchanged cutting-edge legal strategies at the 2014 Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute. Left to right: Lum Ja (Myanmar), Katherine (U.S.), Than Than Aye (Myanmar), Upasana (U.S.), Sean (U.S.), Neung (Thailand), Michelle (U.S.), and Camila (Peru).

Photography: Jessie Adler  Design: Marice Sy

A Ph'nong indigenous woman from Preah Vihear, Cambodia. Her community faces threats to livelihoods and indigenous identity as a result of hydropower developments, including the Don Sahong dam on the Mekong River and the Lower Sesan 2 dam on the Sesan River.
Adolfina García Sandi was one of the plaintiffs in our case against Oxy for oil contamination. In the long legal battle leading up to the 2013 settlement, Adolfina has been a strong spokeswoman and an inspiring leader for our other Achuar plaintiffs. Adolfina lost her 11-year-old son, Olivio Salas, after he consumed contaminated water.
American Jewish World Service
Anonymous (2)
Bertha Foundation
C.S. Fund
Conservation Food & Health Foundation
D.H. Burton Foundation
Flora Family Foundation
Global Witness
Libes Foundation
MacArthur Foundation
McKnight Foundation
Oak Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Oxfam Australia
Oxfam Hong Kong
Renaissance Fund
Sigrid Rausing Trust
Swift Foundation
Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund (Tides)
Trócaire
Underdog Fund (hosted by the Rose Foundation)
Wallace Global Fund

Institutional Funders:

Paul Hoffman
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John De Leon
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Meyer Glitschstein & Crystal
Electronics Frontier Foundation
Curtis Trinko
Hausfeld LLP
Abby Rubinson

Co-Counsel:

Haushar National Park
Chiang Mai, Thailand