EarthRights International 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, which we define as “earth rights.” We specialize in fact-finding, legal actions against perpetrators of earth rights abuses, training grassroots and community leaders, and advocacy campaigns. Through these strategies, EarthRights 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.
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Dear Friends,

2021 brought significant changes to political landscapes worldwide, particularly in the communities EarthRights International proudly partners with. A military junta seized power in Myanmar, destabilizing the region and unleashing unthinkable human rights atrocities on the people. Peru continued to experience political instability, and business elites colluded with governments throughout the Amazon region to foster human rights abuses.

These challenges and the ongoing global pandemic contributed to increased physical and digital security risks, leaving earth rights defenders more vulnerable to violence, intimidation, and surveillance by corrupt governments and corporate actors. Meanwhile, the intensifying climate crisis imposed droughts, food insecurity, fires, and scorching temperatures on communities around the globe.

Despite these challenges, we saw signs of hope. Around the world, people are waking up to the true causes of climate change and recognizing the critical role that defenders play in protecting the planet. People are rising in solidarity with communities defending their rights to speak out against earth rights abuses. They’re learning the importance of thriving forests and clean water. Global demand for strong climate leadership is reaching new heights.

Governments and civil society made progress too. The UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, the European Parliament, and the U.S. government all published resolutions or policy statements recognizing the importance of protecting human rights defenders, including those working on environmental issues. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly published an important report documenting the growing scale of reprisals against earth rights defenders.

2021 confirmed that EarthRights can fill a critical gap in global efforts to protect defenders and help the world avoid the worst effects of the climate crisis. We emerged as strategic leaders in this space, building on our partnerships in the Amazon, Mekong, and U.S. regions and linking local challenges to global trends to support reforms at multiple levels.

Because solving global challenges involves collaboration and cooperation, we continued to build trust with partners at the local and international levels, positioning ourselves to respond to shifting political contexts. Some situations forced us to make tough decisions. In 2021, we closed our Myanmar office out of security concerns. But we continued to work closely with partners in the region to protect defenders and demand that fossil fuel companies stop fueling military atrocities. On a global level, we convened meetings, webinars, and workshops with allies across all our regions to strengthen partnerships, build trust, and share information.

Looking ahead, we brace ourselves for future challenges, secure in the belief that by combining the power of law with the power of people and with the support of partners, funders, and donors, we can weather inevitable social and political challenges. Thank you for rising with us to take on the corrupt actors that violate people’s rights and destroy our planet for profit.

In solidarity,

Ka Hsaw Wa

Photo by Jessie Adler
2021 BY THE NUMBERS

$5.6 million
Total grant revenue

- Grants brought in: 55
- Foundation funders: 40
- Meetings conducted with the Amazon region: 87
- Meetings convened by our Myanmar crisis group: 132
- Alumni served by the inaugural meeting of our Alumni Network: 40
- New internal policies approved: 20
- New staff: 14

- 36,745 New social media followers
- 30 Participants in our first-ever Global Convening
- 29 Ongoing legal cases
- 3 Major campaigns launched
Building on the success of similar work in Thailand, in 2021, EarthRights trained defenders from Cambodia on issues related to climate justice. Due to COVID-19 distancing precautions, the trainings consisted of in-person and virtual training sessions and covered such topics as the root causes of climate change, the consequences of fossil fuel development, Cambodia’s climate change commitments, and the political and economic contexts that enable destructive development. In December, we hosted 16 defenders from Cambodia for a climate justice workshop where they learned about the role that extractive industries and bad actors play in undermining climate justice.

In November, we brought together more than 30 earth rights defenders and activists from communities and civil society organizations in the Mekong, Amazon, and Congo river basins for a virtual global convening. Global experts in Chinese investment, criminalization, and security shared resources and information around challenges and opportunities for global defenders in each field. Large and small group discussions focused on shared lessons and how defenders can best work together to confront increasingly globalized threats. Participants emphasized both the need and urgency for additional collaboration and learning with strong support and interest in a more formal Global School.
IN THAILAND, WE HELPED COMMUNITIES DEFEND THEMSELVES FROM HARMFUL EXTRACTIVE ACTIVITY:

Our Mekong team worked closely with communities in Thailand’s Omkoi district to prepare and develop an administrative legal case to block the construction of a coal mine on their land proposed by the company 99 Thuwanon Co. Ltd. EarthRights worked with community members throughout 2021 to build their capacity to engage in the litigation process to oppose the mine. We conducted a series of workshops and compiled information for a Community Health Impact Assessment to highlight the potential harms the mine would impose on the community.

Together with our local partners, EarthRights also supported the community by helping them understand their rights, local administrative courts, and how they can leverage the law to protect their lives and livelihoods. The lawsuit aims to ensure that the flawed environmental impact assessment for the mine developed by the 99 Thuwanon Company is revoked, which in turn would halt the other permitting processes associated with the project. If implemented, the coal mine will create long-term health and economic problems for the surrounding community. In April of this year, residents of Omkoi filed a lawsuit at the Chiang Mai Administrative Court.

Because global problems are often best addressed on the local level, EarthRights worked with our partner Climate Watch Thailand in 2021 to form the Climate Change Action Network (CCAN). Composed of communities and local non-governmental organizations across Thailand, CCAN held a series of meetings in 2021 to develop the network’s mission and action plan, build capacity, and come to a clearer understanding of the Thai government’s plans to address climate change.

WE WORKED WITH WATER PROTECTORS IN THE U.S. TO DEFEND THEIR RIGHT TO OPPOSE A DESTRUCTIVE TAR SANDS OIL PIPELINE PROJECT:

EarthRights helped secure protest rights for water protectors at the Line 3 pipeline in Minnesota after local law enforcement, funded by the pipeline company Enbridge, unlawfully criminalized vehicular access to an Indigenous-led organizing and convergence space. In July, a Minnesota court granted a temporary restraining order requested by Indigenous water protectors, including EarthRights clients Tara Houska and Winona LaDuke, against Hubbard County and county officials in northern Minnesota. In December, the water protectors won an injunction prohibiting the county from blocking access to the camp.

Photo by Ben Hoffman
WE AMPLIFIED THE VOICES OF FRONTLINE DEFENDERS FIGHTING CLIMATE DESTRUCTION:

In October, we launched our “Frontlines of Climate Justice” campaign to highlight and oppose the growing repression that Indigenous and frontline communities face when resisting fossil fuels, deforestation, and other forms of climate destruction and to ensure their rights to speak up without fear of reprisals. EarthRights developed a series of case studies exploring the challenges communities in the Amazon region, Thailand, and the United States face when opposing destructive development.

In 2021, EarthRights partnered with Indigenous organizations to help ensure their participation in international climate negotiations. We participated in and co-hosted several prominent side events in the lead-up to the COP26 climate conference and supported the participation of representatives from the Wampis Nation, the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and its Affluents (FENAMAD), and the Giniw Collective in COP26 and related events. EarthRights climate policy advisor Natalia Gomez also served as Colombia’s civil society representative for the Escazu Agreement, a new regional plan to strengthen protections for environmental defenders in Latin America.

WE FOUGHT TO HAVE OUR LANDMARK CLIMATE LITIGATION CASE HEARD IN LOCAL COURTS:

In 2021, we defended our earlier victory on behalf of Colorado communities establishing that our climate accountability lawsuit against Exxon and Suncor should be heard in state, not federal, court. In early 2022, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that decision. The case is currently stayed pending a petition from Exxon and Suncor at the U.S. Supreme Court. A victory for our clients would make it easier for other communities to sue fossil fuel corporations for harms caused by the alteration of our climate.

Photo by Cayla Nimmo
EARTHRIGHTS DEFENDERS

2021 presented new opportunities and challenges for EarthRights as we continued to work with defenders to protect their communities, rights, resources, and livelihoods from destructive development. EarthRights played a key role in international policy initiatives in 2021, coordinating closely with civil society partners to launch global trends toward recognizing the rights of environmental and human rights defenders.

WE ADVOCATED FOR STRONGER PROTECTION MEASURES FOR DEFENDERS IN HONDURAS:

Our Amazon and U.S. legal team also supported efforts to protect human rights defenders in Honduras in 2021 by advocating for stronger protections for defenders and supporting a legal case brought by Campesino leaders from the Bajo Aguán region against the state of Honduras at the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. In August, the Commission sided with petitioners in the Bajo Aguán case, finding that the case had merit. The government of Honduras now has a chance to remedy the human rights violations, including investigating approximately 120 murders that took place between 2010 and 2014 that the victims’ communities say were carried out by death squads that continue to operate in the region.

We continue to work closely with partners in Honduras to document crimes against defenders and advocate for broader protection measures. In July, David Castillo, the former head of dam developer DESA, was convicted in Honduras of participating in the 2016 murder of activist Berta Cáceres. We supported Berta’s organization, COPINH, throughout the year.

WE HELPED DEFENDERS SILENCED BY ABUSIVE LAWSUITS:

Our Amazon team continued to provide legal support to defenders from several communities in the region throughout 2021. In October, a Peruvian court dismissed charges against a leader from the Wampis nation unjustly criminalized in a case related to illegal logging. We also provided legal, advocacy, and communications support for FENAMAD, whose leader was slapped with a retaliatory lawsuit by the logging company Canales Tahuamanu S.A.C for denouncing deforestation in the territory of the Mashco Piro isolated Indigenous people. In February, we referred the case to several UN special rapporteurs and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

WE SUPPORTED ACTIVISTS BESIEGED BY MYANMAR’S MILITARY JUNTA:

In response to the military coup in Myanmar, EarthRights established a Crisis Management Team to support defenders in the country. We created and disseminated a Rapid Emergency Assistance Fund to provide temporary relocation support for those in hiding. The fund covers the costs for safehouses, travel, medical fees, digital security provisions, and communication devices, among other needs.
IN THE MEKONG REGION, WE HELPED ACTIVISTS DEVELOP THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO STAND UP TO DESTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT:

After a one-year hiatus due to COVID-19, we hosted 17 earth rights defenders at the EarthRights School in Chiang Mai for a five-and-a-half-month session. In addition to our standard community organizing and climate justice curriculum, classes focused on supporting the well-being and interpersonal skills of our emerging activists and leaders.

The EarthRights Mekong team developed and finalized a toolkit for defenders in the region. This one-of-a-kind resource is intended to help those fighting for environmental justice in the area understand the causes of criminalization and legal harassment while giving them tools to support their digital security, physical security, and well-being.
WE ADVOCATED WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS FOR STRONGER PROTECTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS:

As part of our work with the Protect the Protest coalition, we continued to work with the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable and Representative Jamie Raskin to support legislation to curb SLAPP lawsuits. EarthRights advised Raskin’s office on a Congressional hearing that will take place in 2022 to highlight the repression of environmental advocates in the U.S.

Our U.S. Campaigns team worked closely with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2021 to support legislation that would require the U.S. government to develop a coordinated policy for protecting human rights defenders. In February, we joined with 80 other organizations to urge U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to elevate the protection of human rights defenders as a U.S. foreign policy priority and commit to playing a global leadership role on the issue. We concluded the year by calling on President Biden to use his Democracy Summit as an opportunity to strengthen U.S. commitments to protect environmental defenders and hold corporations accountable for the climate crisis.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

From supporting deadly military juntas to destroying the natural resources of frontline communities, corporate corruption ran rampant in 2021. EarthRights continued to hold corporations accountable for undermining human rights and accelerating our climate crisis.

WE LED PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORTS TO EXPOSE HOW FOSSIL FUEL REVENUES FUEL GENOCIDE IN MYANMAR AND LOBBIED WORLD LEADERS TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS:

In response to 2021’s military coup in Myanmar, EarthRights collaborated closely with a wide network of partners in the United States, the UK, the EU, Thailand, and Korea to support Myanmar activists working to expose the links between fossil fuel revenues and atrocities committed by the junta. We conducted and published in-depth research on Myanmar’s offshore gas industry, showing how companies such as Chevron and Total could either divert revenues or, failing that, responsibly divest from the country. Research also highlighted the role and impacts of sanctions in diverting revenues.

Working closely with partners worldwide, EarthRights urged the U.S., UK, and EU governments to use sanctions to cut off the military’s junta’s access to foreign revenue sources, particularly gas revenues. Our work in this area provided a critical link between civil society organizations, international NGOs, and frontline communities. In early 2022, Chevron and Total announced plans to withdraw from Myanmar, and the EU sanctioned Myanmar’s gas sector.
WE SPARKED CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO SECURE JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CORPORATE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES:

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporations such as Nestlé and Cargill could not be held accountable for human rights abuses at cocoa plantations from which they source their ingredients. In response, EarthRights and key allies worked with Senator Richard Durbin and the Senate Judiciary Committee to promote reform of the Alien Tort Statute to strengthen the ability of victims of business-related human rights abuses to hold companies accountable for harms committed overseas. EarthRights continues to work with allies to move this legislation through Congress.

WE EXPOSED THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION’S HARMFUL LEGACY IN INDIA:

Our U.S. legal team continued to support a community in Gujarat, India, living in the shadow of a destructive coal-fired power plant funded by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – the private lending arm of the World Bank Group. In our case, Budha Ismail Jam v. International Finance Corp, the Supreme Court had previously ruled that the IFC did not have absolute immunity, only immunity subject to the restrictions and exceptions of the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. A lower court later found that these exceptions did not apply, so the IFC was still immune. In 2021, we appealed that decision and prepared to seek Supreme Court review again. Meanwhile, the landmark 2019 Supreme Court holding in this case has already made it possible for other plaintiffs harmed by international organizations to pursue claims in U.S. courts. EarthRights continues to support the Gujarati community through related advocacy efforts.

Photo by Joe Athialy
Our work over the past several years has shown us that frontline communities around the globe often have the will to oppose harmful development but sometimes lack the resources and tools to turn their plans into action. In 2021, we responded to this challenge by launching our Global Education Team, led by Dr. Sean Arthurs, Ed.L.D. The team is responsible for creating our Global School and developing innovative education methodologies and pedagogies to support the training needs of defenders in the Amazon and Mekong regions, as well as our expanding work in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2021, the team worked with colleagues in the Mekong region to operate and supervise the EarthRights School program and with the Amazon team to help coordinate the Seminario program. In November, they gathered allies for a global convening to solicit input from defenders on the key challenges they face in their work and to develop a shared vision of a future Global School.

In 2022 and beyond, our Global Education team will work with colleagues and partners to launch an initial Global School, build a three-continent global defender network, and develop online video-based training modules to educate defenders worldwide on key issues such as criminalization, Chinese investment, and security, among others.
In the Peruvian Amazon, Indigenous peoples are the last stronghold of resistance against the destructive advancement of extractive industries. In 1982, seven Indigenous groups came together to form FENAMAD, an organization that represents their rights and protects their respective territories. Today, it includes 37 native communities.

For more than 20 years, FENAMAD has defended the rights of Indigenous peoples in isolation, particularly the life and integrity of the Mashco Piro peoples whose ancestral lands span 8 million hectares between Peru and Brazil. They choose to avoid contact with the outside world, and their survival depends on a healthy rainforest. Deforestation, mining, and new infrastructure projects threaten the lives and future of the Mashco Piro. They face extinction as extractive companies move into their lands, often illegally.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Peru greenlit extractive activities in the territory of the Mashco Piro peoples. FENAMAD spoke out, urging the government to reconsider given the threats to local communities. In particular, they denounced planned logging activity by the company Canales Tahuamanu S.A.C. The company retaliated with legal action against FENAMAD and its president, Julio Ricardo Cusurichi Palacios. Despite being well within its rights to speak out, Peruvian courts sided with the timber company, ordering FENAMAD to issue a public apology.

EarthRights is proud to partner with FENAMAD for our Frontlines of Climate Justice campaign, representing them in court, advocating for government protections, and amplifying their voices on the international stage. Thanks to our work together, FENAMAD has been better able to exercise its rights to defend itself from abuse at the hands of the company and the court. Moving ahead, EarthRights will continue to provide legal support to FENAMAD and work with it to ensure that the needs of those who live in voluntary isolation are considered in the framework of decisions made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
Solinn Lim recently joined the EarthRights Board of Directors, bringing with her over 20 years of experience in international conservation, development, and human rights advocacy.

Solinn was born in Cambodia and raised mostly by women, some of whom had been detained at labor concentration camps run by the Khmer Rouge, an authoritarian regime that unleashed unthinkable atrocities on the people. Solinn counts these women among her role models, particularly her mother, who taught her the importance of hard work and standing up for her convictions.

As an economically disadvantaged girl in Cambodia, Solinn experienced discrimination and abuse at school at the hands of her teachers, who themselves were victims of the country’s socio-economic inequities. Her early exposure to inequality taught her to believe in universal and equal rights for all and is part of what inspired her career as a human rights advocate.

When Solinn was only 18, she joined forces with her mentor, Kit Whitney, to found a non-profit dedicated to preserving Cambodia’s wildlife. For eight years, she traveled across Cambodia’s provinces and overseas, working with community leaders, law enforcement, scientists, investors, diplomats, and ministers to seek sustainable solutions to complex political and economic challenges. Her work there also took her abroad; one particular visit-to Redwood National Park in California–proved particularly inspiring. Speaking of her experience, she said:

“This was where I learned a Cree prophecy which goes along this line: Only when the last tree has been cut, the last river poisoned, the last fish caught, only then people will know that we cannot eat money.”

This wisdom also reflected that of the Indigenous leaders she has met in Southeast Asia and Latin America who spoke of the need to preserve our shared ecosystem for future generations and seek what she describes as “a more planetary-centric economic model that also offers every being a fair share of prosperity.” From there, she went on to earn a degree in Environmental Policy from Oxford University to supplement the BA in Sociology she already held from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. In 2004, she launched the first-ever environmental and common property rights project in Cambodia and later worked for Oxfam in multiple capacities, including as their country director in Cambodia.

Earlier this year, she founded Saddhā, which means trust, faith, or belief in the (now extinct) Pali language. Saddhā is a mission-oriented business that brokers public-private partnerships intended to transform Cambodian society and show that politics can be used for positive purposes. Limm hopes that with Saddhā, “we [will] help transform Cambodia into a proud human economy and just society for all, especially the most vulnerable groups.”

Solinn is a long-time supporter of EarthRights. On joining the board, she notes, “It is a real privilege, and it allows me to reconnect to a part of me as an environmentalist and humbly contribute to the defense of our planet with our friends and networks around the world.”

Limm’s experiences have taught her that “if you must pick a fight, pick one with those who are powerful even though you know you only have a slim chance of winning, but you must take it on to protect those that are vulnerable.” This conviction is one of many reasons EarthRights is proud to welcome Solinn to our Board of Directors.
EarthRights is currently two-and-a-half years into an ambitious five-year strategic plan that 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 impose on people and the planet. In 2021, we made progress toward realizing this vision through the following Operational Goals:

**GOAL ONE:**
Progress on gender justice and social inclusion.

Addressing gender inequality and women's marginalization and discrimination are critical elements of effective human rights work and are essential for shifting power in favor of frontline communities. EarthRights elevates women’s rights through our legal cases, our support for women defenders, and our training of women activists.

Following the initiative we launched in 2020 to strengthen our approach to diversity, equity, and gender inclusion (DEI), we launched a staff-led team in 2021 to support the implementation of DEI recommendations and to provide a forum for consultation, feedback, and discussion on matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Our Human Resources team and the DEI team ensured that DEI recommendations are available to staff in Spanish, Thai, and Burmese; streamlined our recruitment and performance management process; instituted an anonymous reporting mechanism; provided policy training sessions for staff; and increased internal HR capacity.

**GOAL TWO:**
Progress on physical and cybersecurity protection.

EarthRights is progressing in our efforts to bolster digital and physical security across the organization. In 2021, with the help of a consultant, we finalized a Security Risk Management Framework, which includes a Global Safety and Security Policy, travel security procedures, incident reporting procedures, and a crisis management plan. We also continued to work closely with frontline communities in the Amazon and Mekong regions who face significant threats to their safety, helping them work through specific security challenges.

EarthRights made progress in strengthening our internal digital security practices too, including implementing organization-wide safeguards and encouraging a cultural shift in how individual staff members manage IT risks.
Since 2020, EarthRights has made improving global monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems a key priority. Led by the Senior Manager of Programs and Global Grants, all teams across EarthRights’ offices participated in regular monthly monitoring sessions, quarterly progress reviews, and bi-annual strategic review sessions in 2021. The sessions allowed teams to take stock of their progress in implementing their work plans, assess possible challenges and opportunities, and determine their goals for 2022 and beyond.

GOAL THREE: Progress on physical and cybersecurity protection.

In June 2021, EarthRights hired a climate change policy advisor to strengthen our work supporting frontline communities harmed by climate change and extractive development. This role was instrumental in the launch of our Frontlines of Climate Justice campaign and has helped solidify our position in the global climate and human rights space with UN institutions and processes, governments, and other civil society organizations.

GOAL FOUR: Increasing research and policy advocacy capacity.

EarthRights’ Global Campaigns Team and Global Education Team worked together in 2021 to identify and build relationships with contacts from civil society organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in activities with our Global School. EarthRights also took steps to expand our work in South America by growing our capacity to work with partners from Brazil. In July 2021, EarthRights hired a staff attorney based in Brazil who will lead these activities and facilitate and grow relationships with civil society organizations there.

GOAL FIVE: Assess our geographic scope and research opportunities for geographic expansion.
GOAL SIX:
Grow and diversify funding sources.

EarthRights’ Development team continued to maintain a diverse funding portfolio in 2021, managing and securing 55 grants from nearly 40 different funders totaling over $5.6 million in grant revenue and over $500,000 in individual donations. We also made the decision to further invest in our Development team by hiring a development communications coordinator who oversees fundraising from individual donors and helps elevate the quality of our communications with individual and institutional donors. In 2021, EarthRights grew individual giving by 82 percent from 2020 to 2021.

We also continued to strengthen our ability to attract and manage grants from governments and bilateral donors, using funds from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency to grow our MEL work. Meanwhile, we’ve developed and grown relationships with NGOs experienced in soliciting and managing these grants to apply for co-funding and in consortium arrangements.

Finally, EarthRights continued to foster a culture of philanthropy by deploying all appropriate staff and directors to develop and cultivate relationships with foundations, international NGOs, and government agencies.

GOAL SEVEN:
Strengthen internal communications

The COVID-19 pandemic increased our use of Zoom and other digital communications technologies. Meanwhile, limitations on travel created more isolation between offices. To prevent Zoom fatigue, we made the platform more accessible to staff by creating a Zoom manual that provided comprehensive information on available accounts, logins, language interpretation, and accessibility options. The manual was translated into Spanish and Thai. We also developed an organizational manual for internal communication and effective remote work and continued to use Workplace, an internal web-based communications platform that allows staff to share updates of their work.
# Financials

## Revenue and Other Support

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## Expenses

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Photo by Pablo Lasansky
EarthRights is grateful to the following donors for their generous and sustaining support of our mission and vision. We also thank all donors who give anonymously. We could not do this work without you.

11th Hour Project
American Jewish World Service
Bay and Paul Foundations
Bertha Foundation
Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Fund
Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator
Conservation Food & Health Foundation
D. N. Batten Foundation
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