



**EARTHRIGHTS SCHOOL
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY TRAINING PROGRAM
(July - November 2023)**



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: +66 81 672 3095 (Thailand) | **Email :** ersmm@earthrights.org

PROGRAM INFORMATION

EarthRights International (ERI) believes in the power of law and the power of people in defense of human rights and the environment, which we define as *earth rights*. For more information about EarthRights' work, please visit our website: <https://earthrights.org/>

We are living in unprecedented times with unprecedented challenges: The pandemic has digitized much of our work; the threats to our land and communities caused by climate change and the presence of harmful development in the Mekong region is increasing, while civic space is shrinking. This sets a new and fastly changing context in which community-based activists and earth rights defenders must adapt, think and act creatively, resourcefully and proactively to address these challenges in effective ways.

In response to the need to adapt, EarthRights International has transformed its flagship training program, EarthRights School. EarthRights School offers **an intensive, 6-week online and 3-month residential training program** for activists and earth rights defenders from the Mekong region who are actively working on environmental and human rights issues. **The goal of this year's program is to build the power and capacities of community-based human rights and environment activists** such as community leaders, organizers, trainers, advocates, campaigners, researchers, junior lawyers **in the Mekong region to actively engage within this changing context in order to raise the quality and efficiency and increase the impact of their work.** By equipping **field activists** with updated and relevant knowledge, skills, and networks, we can strengthen our collective impact to defend human rights and the environment in these unique times. For more information about the curriculum themes, please see the *Program Elements* section.

TARGET GROUP AND SELECTION REQUIREMENTS

- EarthRights International **alumni from any of EarthRights training programs** (including Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute (MLAI), Mekong Legal Network (MLN), and Health and EarthRights Training (HEART)) **OR people working for an alumni organization, connected to and referred by an alumni** from our training programs
- A community leader, organizer, trainer, advocate, campaigner, researcher, junior lawyer, with **minimum 2-3 years of field experience** and you want to develop and update these skills further with particular focus on project management, campaign and advocacy for climate justice, and digital skills.
- **Working directly in/for a specific community** impacted by development projects **OR** working for an organization that works directly with a local community in the field of human and environmental rights.
- **Committed to going back and continuing working** with their organization/community, or in a similar organization or initiative after completing the program, supporting local communities.
- **Your organization must commit to supporting your participation** before, during, and after the School, and plan with you how they will re-involve you when you return, what your role will be, how they will build on and utilize your newly acquired skills and knowledge.
- **Participation in the course is your first and full priority:**
- You are not studying at university or other educational programs/institutions during the whole period of the Earthrights School program.
- You are away from your work for three months while you are studying in person.
- **Able to communicate** the basics of human rights and environmental justice and the topics related to your work **in English and willing to put extra effort and consistently improve your English skills when needed.** (This is a regional program, and classes/coursework will be in English).

****EarthRights School strongly encourages applications from women, members of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, and those living and working in rural communities. We do not discriminate based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political belief, age, gender, physical ability, or sexual orientation.****

****EarthRights will cover the costs of travel and visa expenses, food and lodging, and a small monthly stipend from mid-July until the end of November 2023.****

WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS WILL YOU GAIN FROM THIS TRAINING PROGRAM?

By the end of the training course, you will...

- Practice the steps of project cycle management and proposal writing and know how to use it as a tool for organizing initiatives and campaigns, fundraising, and managing your resources.
- Identify the causes and effects of the challenges your community is facing alongside with the needs and strengths of your community and define opportunities and solutions to address them.
- Identify, understand, and map actors and stakeholders involved in your advocacy/campaign and when and how to engage and communicate with them.
- Practice planning a campaign, setting campaign vision/goals/objectives, action plans.
- Identify legal tools and approaches related to your advocacy/campaign and become able to apply them to your community context.
- Enhance research and writing skills for proposal writing, campaign and advocacy purposes.
- Develop advocacy tools using storytelling and media for your organization and community, and know how and when to use these tools safely during your campaign or project.
- Learn and practice community organizing skills and approaches, such as verbal and nonverbal communication, to work with people in an inclusive and participatory way in leadership, teamwork, and facilitation.
- Practice awareness and reflection of yourself as a leader and team member and taking care of your mental, emotional and physical health so that you can take care of the mental, emotional and physical health of your team and community.
- Enhance digital skills and literacy, including digital security, video and photography, and practice using these skills and tools for advocacy purposes.
- Understand the global and local context and connections of climate change, and learn from climate justice movements across different regions.

Opportunities:

- Learn with and from diverse activists and earth rights defenders in the region, and practice living and learning cross-culturally
- Learn from and consult with local and international experts including lawyers, researchers, campaigners, and facilitators who can give insight and guidance on developing your project and skills.
- Work on your own project idea, design your own project, and have a plan ready to be implemented when you return to your community.
- Have a draft proposal of your planned project or campaign that you can adapt to apply for different grant programs.
- Implement your project/campaign/action plan upon graduating and receive further support such as training, mentoring, consultation, advice, partnerships.
- Strengthen and expand your network by connecting to the skills, knowledge, and opportunities of our alumni network of over 600 alumni, create new partnerships to support each other and work together.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The 2023 course consists of 2 parts: **6 weeks online and 3 months in-person**. The curriculum focuses on **climate justice, advocacy & campaigns, community organizing, project cycle management, legal tools and rights-based approaches, digital skills and literacy, leadership, teamwork and mental health** - knowledge and skills that are necessary to adapt as an activist in the Mekong Region.

After being selected as a participant, **you will be required to actively participate in the whole program**, 6 weeks online and 3-month in-person.

The remote **6 weeks' online part** is dedicated to **introducing the modules** of the course, conducting a **needs assessment**, and providing targeted **English support**. The needs assessment will inform the exact content of the lessons in order to ensure the course is relevant to your needs and the needs of the organization/community you work with. The online period will take 6 hours per week (2 days, 3 hours each) meeting your teachers and classmates online, and a few hours of assignments between the lessons, such as targeted English learning, and meetings with your organization for the needs assessment and project idea creation, for which we estimate 6-10 hours/week. The exact amount of time you need to invest also depends on how effectively you manage your own time.

Once the online weeks are completed, you'll have time to get ready to travel to Chiang Mai where you will live and study together with 14-16 other activists in the Mekong region for 3 months. During the **3 months in-person part** learning takes place 24/7, both inside and outside the classroom space and time, as we are **learning and living together as a group**. During this period, you will **widen and deepen your knowledge within the course modules, strengthen and practice fundamental skills** to support your growth as an activist such as stakeholder mapping and engagement, research, writing, digital skills, holistic security practices, facilitation, storytelling, teamwork, communication, reflection, media-messaging, and strategic campaigning. The **field training** enables you to practice what you learn, meeting and communicating with partner communities in Thailand.

As you learn more skills and knowledge, you **may develop and refine a project idea** and an action plan. By the end of the course, you may even have a finalized project proposal that is ready to implement with your organization or community. EarthRights may provide **follow-up support** for the project implementation, such as further training and consultations. Exact details of the follow-up will depend on the nature of your project, future activity and engagement in the network.

While training at our center, our schedule is **intense and full**. We train Monday through Friday, approximately 5 hours of **in-class training** per day. The exact starting and finishing times depend on the actual teacher, content, and activities. You should also expect **individual and group homework and longer-term assignments** during the week, which are usually completed in the evening or on the weekends, sometimes over the course of many days. You will also have **consultations** with your teachers, where you have the opportunity to ask your own questions, get feedback and advice related to the specific context, features and challenges of your work and start networking.

After graduating, you will join or reconnect to our diverse and extensive **alumni network**, with access to our **Alumni Support Program**. In order to start networking, expect to stay with us approximately 1 week after graduation so that you can participate in the actual running events of Earthrights and/or our partners in Chiang Mai.

**Please note that EarthRights School is an independent program not affiliated with any university, and therefore does not offer university or academic credit **

LEARNING APPROACHES & METHODS

EarthRights School emphasizes the value of local knowledge, wisdom, and life experience of the participants. Therefore, it adopts a **participatory-learning approach**. Participatory learning and teaching methods focus on maximizing participation of students in the learning process. It includes sharing and learning from your strengths and life experience as well as those of your classmates, and using activities that allow **learning by doing**. All classes incorporate hands-on learning, which includes:

- **Active learning:** Problem solving, discussion, critical thinking, asking questions, debate, brainstorming, making connections to your and your classmates' life experiences, working with examples from the field case studies.
- **Cooperative learning:** Teamwork, working collaboratively on projects and problems, learning from and supporting each other through both flexibility and sharpness, practicing commitment in action, empathy, clear and sensitive communication, managing your time effectively.
- **Experiential learning:** Learning lessons through experiences such as role-plays, simulations, presentations, outdoor activities, body movement, and working in-the-field with community organizations through field training. After going through an experience, we always reflect upon it, draw our conclusions, define our learning outcomes and how we can build on them in the future.
- **Homework, individual and group assignments and consultations** serve the purpose of you adapting the course content and skills into practice and into your own specific local context. They are an integral part of the learning process.

These **diverse activities and approaches** may be different from what you are used to or unfamiliar for you. Some of the activities might be playful, while others are serious, some you might find strange or challenging, while some you may find fun and easy. At EarthRights School, we believe that **transformation and growth happens when you challenge yourself, your abilities, and your mindset**. Therefore, we invite you to **get out of your comfort zone** and **be open and excited to try activities, experiences, and approaches that may be entirely new to you**. We invite you to **try out new ways of thinking and acting** so that you can enhance and enrich your competencies and become more resourceful and confident as a leader and you may create new results and outcomes.

REQUIREMENTS OF PARTICIPATION

- You must **commit to participate during the full time of the course**, including the 6 weeks online and the 3 months in-person in Chiang Mai, and any follow-up needed after graduating. It is not allowed to arrive later or leave earlier than the program dates in the timeline below.
- You must come prepared to the in-person training with a **project/campaign/advocacy idea, addressing human rights and environmental issues your community is facing and your organization is working on**, to use and present it as an example and case study.
- You must have **at least strong elementary or intermediate English language skills** (speaking, listening, reading and writing) **with a commitment to learn and practice English**. You should be able to communicate your ideas and discuss human and environmental rights topics. If you are shortlisted, your English level will be assessed.
- You must **live at the training center and follow the rules regarding security, safety and communal living**. You will share community duties such as cooking, cleaning, and maintenance work.
- You must **be open to meeting and creating a community with people from different backgrounds and respect people's backgrounds and identities**. You must fully participate in

communal life and participatory decision-making with these diverse people.

- You must **follow and respect the non-discrimination policy of the school**. EarthRights School has a zero tolerance policy for discriminatory attitudes and behaviors based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political belief, age, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, or other status.
- You must **attend all classes, for the whole day**. When in class, you are expected to **fully participate** in the experiential and participatory learning activities and methods as mentioned in the *Learning Approaches* section. You must **be on time** for the online and in-person lessons, sessions, meetings and activities every day. You must **complete and submit your individual and group assignments on time** by their deadlines.
- You must **prioritize your full participation during the program**, over other work and studies. We will not accept students who are currently studying in University or other educational programs. You will need to communicate and agree with your organization to take three months leave from work responsibilities in order to participate in the program.
- You must **have a passport valid until May 2024** at the time of acceptance into the program. EarthRights will not pay for your passport.

TIMELINE

Date (2023)	Activity
15 May	EarthRights School Information Meeting, Q&A, 2:00 pm Thailand Time. Please register at the link here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScN_jYnWjG4ZnbgCSjNhiiNXDTB-jY2EPATCyQxi92-8KBr8g/viewform <i>**We recommend organizational partners, alumni, and interested applicants to attend this meeting for more information about the changes we are making to this year's School program.**</i>
31 May	Application Deadline
5-16 June	Notice of shortlisting
5-16 June	Interviews with shortlisted applicants
26-30 June	Selection results announced
17 July - 25 Aug	Online course and needs assessment
3 Sept	Arrival to Chiang Mai
4 Sept	First day of course
24 Nov	Last day of course & Graduation
1 Dec	Departure Day

APPLICATION PROCESS

- The application deadline is **31 May 2023**. Applications may be sent by email (*see contact information on the title page*).
- Complete the application form by yourself, and answer the essay questions in English language only. It is OK to use a simple and clear language; you do not have to write at an academic level.
- References: You must have two people complete the recommendation form. Your referees must come from a teacher from your previous studies, an EarthRights alumni, or a community/organization leader. These recommendation forms should be submitted together with your application.
- We invite you to attend the information sharing sessions on 15 May about EarthRights School if you have any questions about this year's program. The link to register is above.
- Due to the high number of applicants, EarthRights School will only contact short-listed applicants to set up an interview and English assessment.