

EARTHRIGHTS SCHOOL (ERS)
Community Leadership and Advocacy Training
(May - November 2025)

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

The EarthRights School (ERS) is a unique training program in the Mekong Region for community-based advocates from China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam who are working on environmental and human rights issues. The goal of ERS is to train grassroots and community leaders about the impacts of large-scale development projects on communities and the environment and how they can advocate for more equitable development in their communities. ERS enables participants to return to their communities with the knowledge and skills to help empower communities to play a more significant part in local decision-making and the protection of their environment.

The theme of the 7-month program is **“Community Leadership and Advocacy.”** It provides core knowledge on development processes, human rights, environmental standards, and corporate accountability, along with practical advice on how to engage national, regional, and international systems and mechanisms such as the U.N. system, financial institutions, human rights commissions, and private corporate engagement. ERS’s curriculum integrates storytelling and legal advocacy strategies used to address earth rights abuses caused by large-scale development projects, with a focus on land rights, environmental and social impact assessments, regional project investments, hydropower dams, coal-fired power plants, and special economic zones. In particular, the program centers on the development of practical skills in advocacy, including strategic campaign planning, stakeholder engagement, media messaging, and community empowerment and mobilization.

TARGET GROUP AND ELIGIBILITY

- Individual working for an organization associated with EarthRights alumni and community partners or individuals with proven community work experience in environmental and human rights advocacies.
- Community leaders, organizers, trainers, advocates, campaigners, researchers, and junior lawyers with a minimum of 2-3 years of field experience who wish to develop further their skills.
- Individual working with a community affected by harmful development projects or those employed by an organization that collaborates with local communities on human rights and environmental rights issues.
- Individual must demonstrate a commitment to returning to their organization or community or to a similar initiative with the intention of supporting local communities after completing the program.
- Participant’s organization must agree to support their participation before, during, and after ERS and help plan to integrate the acquired learnings into the organization’s future activities.
- Participant will be away from work for 7 ½ months and must participate in in-person classes and assigned fieldwork.
- Able to communicate the fundamentals of human rights and environmental justice in English, as well as topics related to a participant's work, and be willing to make an effort to improve their English language skills as needed.
- Participant has a desire to work with other activists and respect diversity and other people’s knowledge, background, and experience.

***ERS encourages applications from women, members of indigenous groups, and those living and working in rural communities. We uphold a policy of non-discrimination based on*

*race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political belief, age, gender, physical ability, or sexual orientation.***

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

By participating in this training program, you will gain:

- **Understanding of environmental and human rights issues:** You will develop a deep understanding of the environmental and human rights challenges faced in the Mekong Region and globally.
- **Advocacy skills:** You will be equipped with skills to raise awareness for protecting human rights and the environment.
- **Community organizing and resource mobilization skills:** You will learn to co-develop with communities to identify environmental issues, organize collective actions, and resource mapping and mobilization.
- **Stakeholder analysis:** You will gain the ability to identify and analyze the roles of various stakeholders involved in earth rights abuses, as well as the financial systems and power structures that support them.
- **Strategic planning:** You will create a clear and actionable plan to address the challenges your community faces, adapting and enhancing existing initiatives.
- **Research skills:** You will enhance your ability to conduct evidence-based research and explore local, regional, and global contexts related to environmental and human rights issues, enabling you to identify root causes and stakeholders involved in these challenges.
- **Legal knowledge:** You will acquire a basic understanding of your legal rights and know how to use them to protect yourself and the community from any human rights threats.
- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** You will learn to respect the differences and appreciate the similarities of others in terms of values, culture, backgrounds, and experiences.
- **Security practices:** You will learn to integrate risk assessment and management strategies and prioritize the security of yourself and the communities you work with.
- **Self-care and community well-being:** You will gain insight into the connection between mental, emotional, social, legal, and physical health essential for your well-being and others.
- **Networking and collaboration on the regional level:** You will create a strong connection with other earth rights defenders in ERS and in the larger network.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

After being selected as a participant, you will be expected to participate in every aspect of the program. It will run through 7½ months of in-person, residential training in Chiang Mai, where you will live and learn together with 14-16 other activists from the Mekong Region. This immersive experience allows for continuous learning, both inside and outside the classroom, fostering a collaborative environment. Throughout this period, you will deepen your understanding of the program's themes and essential skills, such as stakeholder mapping, research writing, digital literacy, security practices,

facilitation, storytelling, teamwork, communication, media messaging, and strategic campaigning.

Field trips and practicum opportunities will enable you to apply what you have learned in real-world contexts by interacting with partner communities in Thailand and your own country. As you acquire new skills and knowledge, you will have the chance to develop and refine an action plan. By the end of the program, you will have a plan for a project, campaign, or other form of intervention ready for implementation with your organization or community. EarthRights may provide follow-up support for project execution, including additional training and consultations, and for your continued engagement within the network.

The program's schedule is rigorous, with classes running Monday through Friday for 5-6 hours each day. Specific times may vary based on the instructor and content. You will also work on individual and group assignments, which are completed during evenings or weekends. Additionally, you will have opportunities for consultations with your trainers and mentors, allowing you to seek feedback and advice related to your work's specific context and challenges.

Upon graduation, you will join our extensive alumni network and gain access to our Alumni Support Program.

ERS is an independent program and is not affiliated with any university. Thus, it does not offer any academic credit.

Training Dates

May 3-4, 2025	Arrival in Chiang Mai
May 5 - Jul. 25, 2025	Start of in-person training
Jul. 26 - Sep. 5, 2025	Field practicum in the home country and work session
Sep. 6-7, 2025	Return to Chiang Mai
Sep. 8 - Nov. 27, 2025	Continuation of in-person training
Nov. 28, 2025	Graduation
Nov. 29-30, 2025	Departure

EarthRights will cover expenses related to travel, visa, food, and lodging. Participants will be provided with a small stipend from May until the end of Nov. 2025.

LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODS

ERS emphasizes the value of local knowledge, wisdom, and life experiences of participants. Therefore, it adopts a **participatory learning approach**. Participatory learning and teaching methods focus on maximizing the engagement of students in the learning process. It includes sharing and learning from your strengths and life experience as well as those from others 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 life experiences and your classmates', working with examples from field case studies, field trips, and practicum.
- **Cooperative learning:** Teamwork, working together on projects and problems, learning from and supporting each other, practicing commitment in action, empathy, clear and sensitive communication, and effective managing of time.
- **Experiential learning:** Learning lessons through experiences such as role-play, theater, presentation, digital content creation, simulation, outdoor activity, body movement, and working on the field with community organizations. After going through an experience, we always reflect, draw our conclusions, and define our learning outcomes and how we can build on them in the future.
- **Homework, individual and group assignments, and consultations:** Applying and adapting the program's content and skills to your specific local context and practice. They are an integral part of the learning process and help you to move from *knowing* to *knowing how* and to *doing*.

COMMITMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS OF PARTICIPATION

- You **commit full-time participation during the program**, including 6 ½ months in-person in Chiang Mai and a 1-month field practicum, which requires local implementation and regular check-ins online, survey assessments, and focused group discussion after graduation to determine impact. It is not allowed to arrive later or leave earlier than the program dates or to miss any parts of the program.
- You come prepared for the in-person training with a **project/campaign/advocacy idea that addresses human rights and environmental issues that your community is facing and your organization is working on**, to use and present it as an example and case study.
- You have **strong elementary or intermediate English language skills** (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) **with a commitment to learning and practicing English**. You should be able to communicate your ideas and discuss topics related to human and environmental rights. You must be willing to improve your English skills during the whole program. If you are shortlisted, your English skills will be assessed.
- You **live at the training venue and follow the ground rules of the training as well as the rules of the venue regarding security, safety, and communal living**. You will participate in and be responsible for housekeeping 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 participate in communal life and participatory decision-making with diverse people.

- You **follow and respect ERS's non-discrimination policy**. ERS has zero tolerance for discriminatory attitudes and behaviors based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political belief, age, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, or other status.
- You **attend all classes**. In class, you are expected to **participate** in the experiential and participatory learning activities and methods as mentioned in the *Learning Approaches and Methods* section. You must **be on time** for the in-person sessions, meetings, and activities. You must **complete and submit your individual and group assignments on time** by their deadlines.
- You **prioritize full participation during the program** over other work and studies. We will not accept students who are currently studying in a university or other educational programs. You will need to communicate and agree with your organization to take 7 ½ months' leave from work to participate in the program.
- You **have a passport valid until July 2026**. EarthRights will not pay for your passport.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- The application deadline is **Dec. 6, 2024**. **We may re-launch the call for application in certain countries, depending on the availability of slots. Applications received after this deadline will only be considered under exceptional circumstances.** Applications must be submitted via the online form [here](#). Complete the application form by yourself and answer the questions in English language only. It is alright to use simple words; you do not have to write at an academic level.
Tip: Make it personal, simple, and based on your experience. Do not use AI, and do not copy content from your organization or your previous applications for work or other programs.
- **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 must be submitted together with your application.
- We invite you to attend the ERS information meeting on **Oct. 24, 2024**, if you have any questions about this year's program. Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/GCn6nMgPj4>.
- Due to the high number of applicants, ERS will only contact shortlisted individuals for the interview to assess their English language and critical thinking skills.
- Those who are not selected will be on the waiting list. In case a shortlisted individual drops out, people on the waiting list will be contacted and offered the opportunity to join.

TIMELINE

Date	Activity
Oct. 24, 2024	ERS information meeting and Q&A. Register here: https://forms.office.com/r/GCn6nMgPj4 <i>**We recommend that organizational partners, alumni, and interested applicants attend this meeting for more information about the changes we are making to this year's ERS program.**</i>
Dec. 6, 2024	Application deadline
Jan.- Feb. 2025	Notice for shortlisted individuals
Feb. 2025	Interviews with shortlisted individuals
Mar. 2025	Final participants announced
May 3-4, 2025	Arrival in Chiang Mai



ERS information meeting registration

Use the link <https://forms.office.com/r/GCn6nMgPj4> or the QR code.



Application form and learning needs assessment

Use the link <https://forms.office.com/r/GAdR0Z7Gb4> or the QR code.



Recommendation letter

Use the link <https://forms.office.com/r/JSubXXaQeu> or the QR code.