



EARTHRIGHTS SCHOOL PROGRAM (JULY 2020- FEBRUARY 2021) PROGRAM INFORMATION PACKET

Our world is on the brink of a destructive climate emergency, and unchecked corporate power has resulted in widespread human rights violations. Corporations have consistently and knowingly prioritized profits over human rights and the environment while hiding behind the legal and judicial systems they helped to create in order to avoid accountability. Governments and financial institutions have supported these corporate interests, weakening protections for the victims of corporate greed. EarthRights adds critical value to global movements through our strategic litigation, our training programs, and our growing global campaigns and communications capacities. The current global scenario is not cause for despair but for renewed energy to stand with communities and civil society partners to demand justice and accountability. We are proud to be a transformative thought leader in the global movement for a more equitable and just world.

EarthRights International 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 recognize that a healthy environment cannot be maintained without respect for human rights, and that human rights are unattainable without healthy ecosystems. We specialize in fact-finding, legal actions against perpetrators of earth rights abuses, trainings, and campaigns.

About the EarthRights School

The EarthRights School is a unique residential training program that is designed to build power, to put legal tools in the hands of frontline activists and NGOs and to help communities protect their rights and environments in the face of unjust and exploitative development projects. The theme of program is "*Community Leadership for Earth Rights*." The curriculum integrates storytelling and legal advocacy strategies used to address earth rights abuses caused by large-scale development projects, with a strong focus on land rights, environmental and social impact assessments.

The goal of EarthRights School is to develop the next generation of Earth Rights Defenders committed to defending environmental and human rights in the Mekong region, by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and networks necessary to safely support communities affected by harmful development projects.

The course enables students to understand the **impacts of large-scale economic development projects** on communities and the environment and learn how they can advocate for more equitable development in their communities. We train emerging leaders on effective strategies to avert and/or reduce negative impacts and improve outcomes of investment projects through strengthening the capacity of local communities to advocate on their own behalf. Through the tailored focus of the program, EarthRights School enables participants to return to their communities with the knowledge and skills to help empower communities play a greater part in local decision-making and protection of their environment.

The School also equips students with practical advice on how to engage with national, regional and international systems and mechanisms such as the UN system, financial institutions, human rights commissions, and private corporations. 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.

EarthRights School emphasizes the value of local knowledge, wisdom, and life experience of the participants. Therefore, it adopts a **participatory-learning approach** to the course where individuals share and learn from each other's particular strengths and experiences. All classes incorporate hands-on learning through group discussions, role-plays, debates, case studies, oral presentations, videos, and other learner-centered activities to ensure participants engage with the material in a critical and practical way.

Through a **series of field trips**, participants also get the opportunity to examine the threats posed to communities by various projects around Thailand, such as coal-fired power plants and large-scale industrial zones. The students also learn first-hand about communities' campaigning strategies to protect traditional livelihoods, community health, and local environments.

In 2020 we are recruiting candidates from organizations actively involved in advocacy on earth rights issues related to the following themes:

1. Climate Justice and accountability
2. Human rights and environmental rights defenders
3. Corporate accountability

The course runs from 6 July 2020– 19 February 2021:

1. Six months of classroom-based training (July-November and January-February)
2. Six weeks of field work during which students return home to conduct research (November-December)

The program takes place predominately in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The six weeks field research is a unique opportunity for students to use the knowledge they have gained from the program to investigate and document first-hand, the earth rights abuses in their communities as practicing researchers. The students then return to the school to present their research findings and prepare individual action plans for how they will work with the community.

Upon graduation students will become part of a strong network of alumni with the confidence to implement their action plans. They will also gain the support of other alumni members, who operate as a network in the Mekong region to support each other's work.

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

EarthRights School Application Criteria

All individuals who meet the below criteria are encouraged to apply. EarthRights School also strongly encourages applications from women, members of ethnic minorities, and those living in rural communities. We do not discriminate based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political belief, age, gender, physical ability, or sexual orientation.

Applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Have a minimum of two years' experience working with communities and/or civil society groups focused on human rights or the environment.
2. Come from any of the Greater Mekong countries (Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Laos PDR, Vietnam, Thailand).
3. Have at least basic level English language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), which will be determined through a personal interview and willingness to improve language skills. This is important because the classes will be taught in English.
4. Willingness and ability to live at the training center during the classroom sessions in shared dormitory style rooms and follow the rules regarding security, safety and communal living including undertaking cooking and cleaning, and maintenance responsibilities.
5. Participants must participate in communal life, participatory decision-making, and experiential learning, including sharing and reflecting on their own experiences.
6. Applicants must be interested in learning more about different aspects of advocacy strategies and about developing an advocacy plan to be used in their communities.
7. Participants must complete the field research, which includes creating a field research plan and conducting an original research project, and presenting their findings related to an earth rights issue in the Mekong region.
8. Participants must participate in communal life, participatory decision-making, and experiential learning, including sharing and reflecting on their own experiences.
9. Participants must be interested in meeting and living with people from different backgrounds and respect people as individuals, regardless of their backgrounds.
10. Commitment to 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.
11. Participants must commit to active participation in advocacy on earth rights issues in the greater Mekong region for at least one year following the program.

12. EarthRights School will not consider any applicant who is enrolled in a university or other school program.

13. Have a valid passport and/or travel documents for travel to and within Thailand. Please note that the program does not pay for passport costs and accepted students will have to have a valid passport at the time of starting the program until at least 31 August 2021.

To Apply you must submit the following:

1. Fully complete the application form in English along with the essay questions.
2. Two Recommendation Letters: Have two people who know you well each complete the recommendation form. One recommendation should be from a member of an organization you are involved with and the other should be from a civil society leader in your community (such as a teacher, an NGO worker or EarthRights alumni). These should be returned together with the application.

The application deadline is **March 27, 2020. Applications received after this deadline will only be considered under exceptional circumstances.**

Applications may be sent by e-mail to: ersmm@earthrights.org

Due to the high number of applicants, EarthRights School will only contact short-listed applicants to set up a test and an interview. The test will assess the applicant's English language and critical thinking skills.