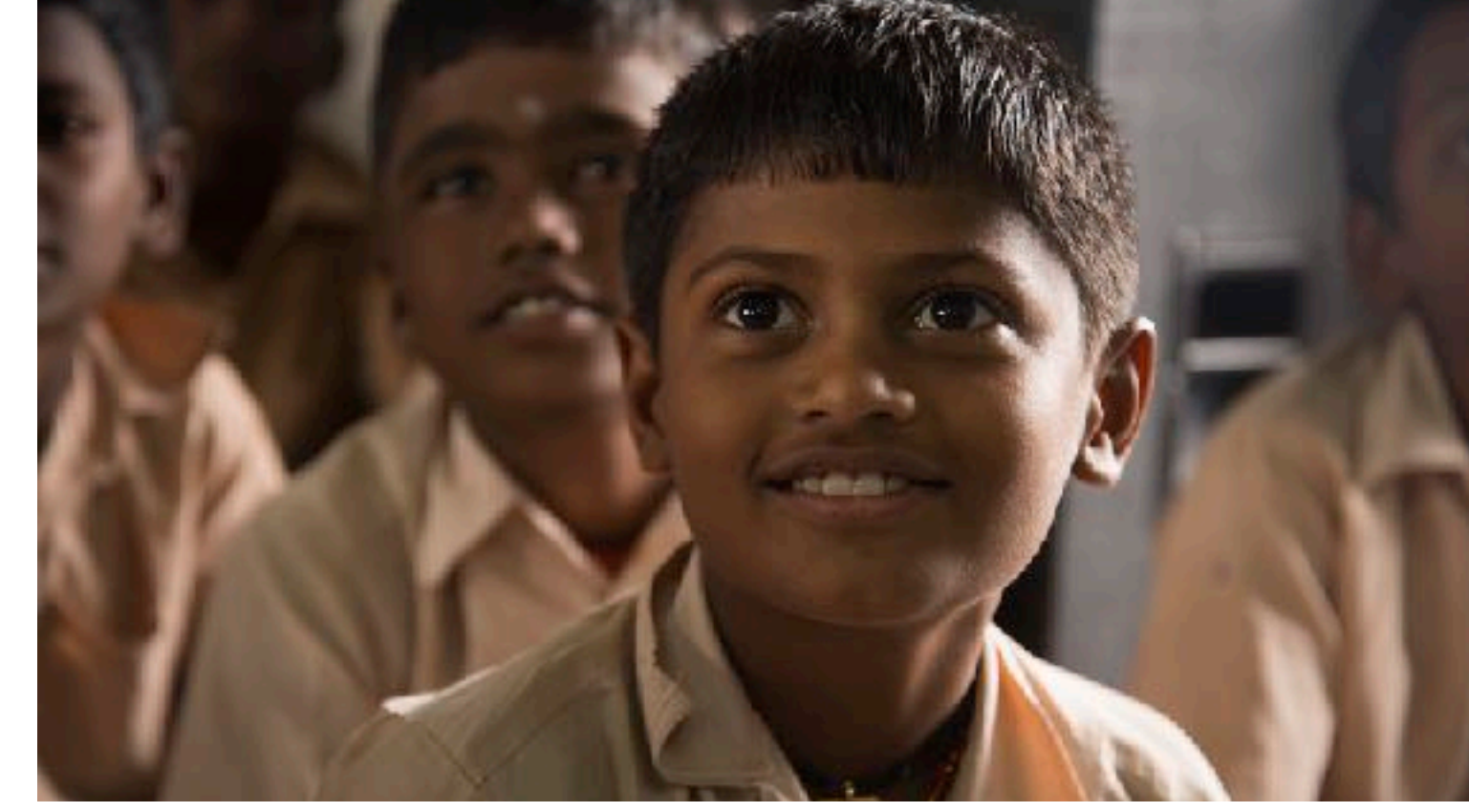




**Youth Conservation  
Action Network**

**Inspire | Empower | Nurture**

YouCAN functions as a mission-driven non-profit organisation founded with the vision of an Earth Educator in every school and learning space in India. We improve opportunities for K-12 students to connect with nature locally and practice climate action during their formative years.





# Founders' Note

The moment we hear the word Nature, something deep within us is evoked. Images of forests, greenery, birds, and butterflies flash before us. They kindle joy, calmness, and a longing to be around them.

Yet, humanity's indifference to the natural world has created many issues that threaten biodiversity and our lives. We are the last generation that can save our future before it's too late. At such a time, our Planet needs every one of us to be an environmentalist in our own right. However, there is an acute scarcity of such individuals in India, where natural ecosystems are lifelines for the well-being of 1.3 billion people and magnificent wildlife.

We strongly believe that this scarcity can be turned into abundance through an Earth Educator in every school, and our generation must realise it through determination, courage, and imagination.

Our work is designed to change the practice and narrative of environmental education; from a system that spreads awareness to one that enables action. We are committed to being on this path, taking one step at a time, by implementing short-term and long-term experiential learning programs that inspire, empower and nurture students, youth, and teachers to become environmentalists. This vision is impossible to realize without the support of hundreds of people who believe in a greener environment. Let us make our efforts to revive the wellness of our planet and its people.

Becoming an environmentalist begins with you!

Welcome to YouCAN, we invite you to join us on this journey and enrich it!

With gratitude,

Rachita and Ramnath

Co-Founders, Youth Conservation Action Network (YouCAN)

# Why Earth Education?

What does Earth Education mean to you?

Does it evoke the image of children being taken on a nature walk?

Or does it evoke images of schools using nature-based learning to teach students?

Does it mean people restoring soil or forests, and realizing the importance of it?

Or does it mean workshops with lawyers and bureaucrats on using the Constitution to protect the natural environment?

In indigenous cultures that are still connected to nature, learning happens through close observation and demonstration. People learn something with somebody. They laugh. They learn. Knowledge is passed with a helping hand, assisting somebody, then gradually stepping back. People learn through yarning, a form of storytelling. Learning happens through movement.

Every activity is a deep engagement that connects mind, body, heart, and spirit.

People respect other beings. They work with the land than against it. They are environmentalists and conservationists by lifestyle.

Such an approach to thinking, being, and doing can be the most impactful way to inspire, empower and nurture students and youth to become environmentalists.

This is Earth Education to us.

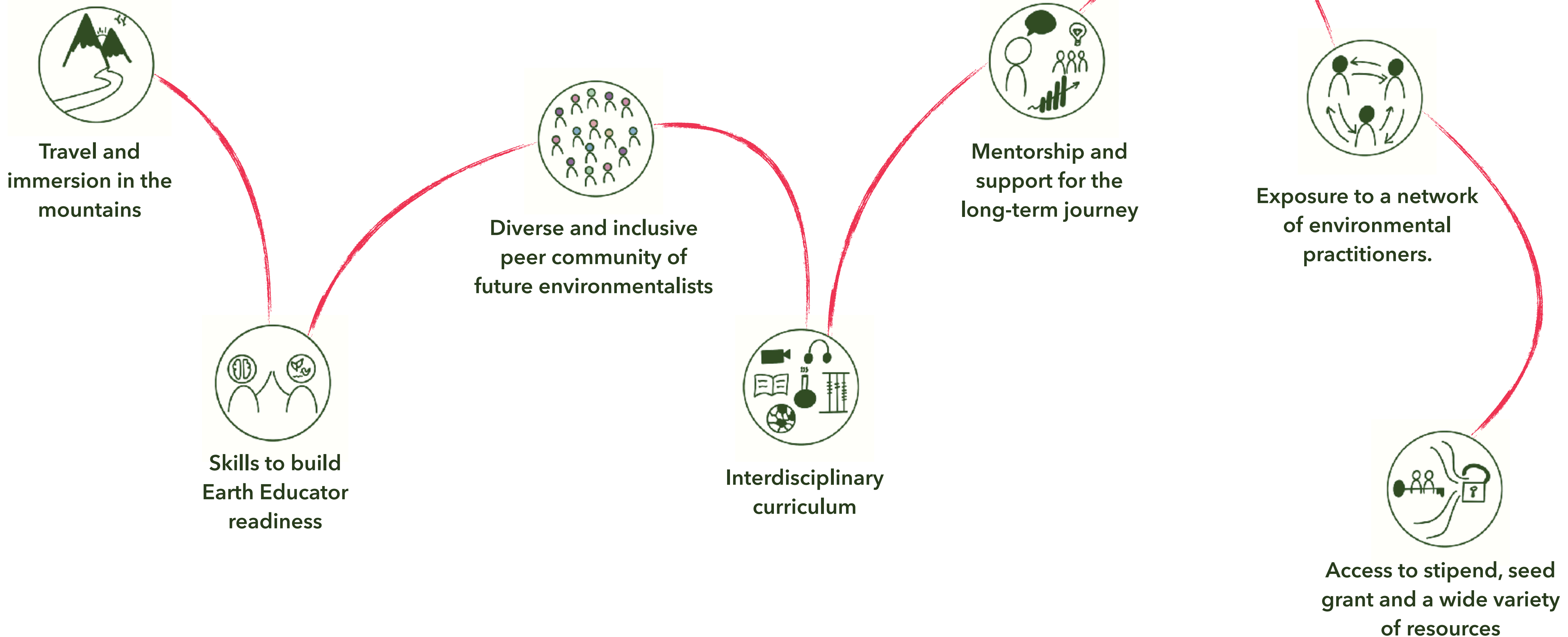
What does Earth Education mean to you?

“What we are doing to forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”

- *Mahatma Gandhi*

# The Earth Educators Fellowship

The Earth Educators Fellowship brings together 20 young volunteers for the environment, emerging grassroots conservationists, and schoolteachers and educators passionately bringing students closer to nature and teaching them the intricacies of climate change. They are invited to embark on a one-year journey to explore the natural world, curate immersive learning experiences for students, build skills, and a community to lead conservation action in their locality.



# The Philosophy

Our desire to offer a one-of-its-kind experience for the participants led us to carefully study Polynesian wayfinding.

About 7000 years ago, Polynesians navigated open-ocean voyages on double-hulled canoes. They used nature to navigate instead of instruments such as a compass. Through intense sailing, about 22 hours a day, for thousands of miles, drawing clues from the wind, waves, stars, clouds, sun, moon, birds, ocean swells, and other signs of nature to know the direction and location of their canoe at sea, Polynesians discovered the Pacific Islands.

At the core of their voyages is a courageous philosophy of exploration. "Once you have the idea, vision, decision, or the destination you are trying to get to, as long as you believe that destination is something that you truly value, then, even though you don't know how to get there, that's part of the journey."

Such a wayfinding philosophy is needed not only for open ocean navigators but for every one of us who has an inclination to protect and restore the natural environment.

Earth Educators Program was conceived after an inspiring conversation with the legendary native Hawaiian navigator Nainoa Thompson who was instrumental in leading the revival of the art and science of wayfinding.

The Earth Educators' journey comprises three stages for which we use the word 'Canoe' as a metaphor for the journey, and 'land,' their destination.



## Preparing the Canoe

Guided walks  
Understanding the community  
Exploratory activities on ecology and education



## Sailing the Canoe

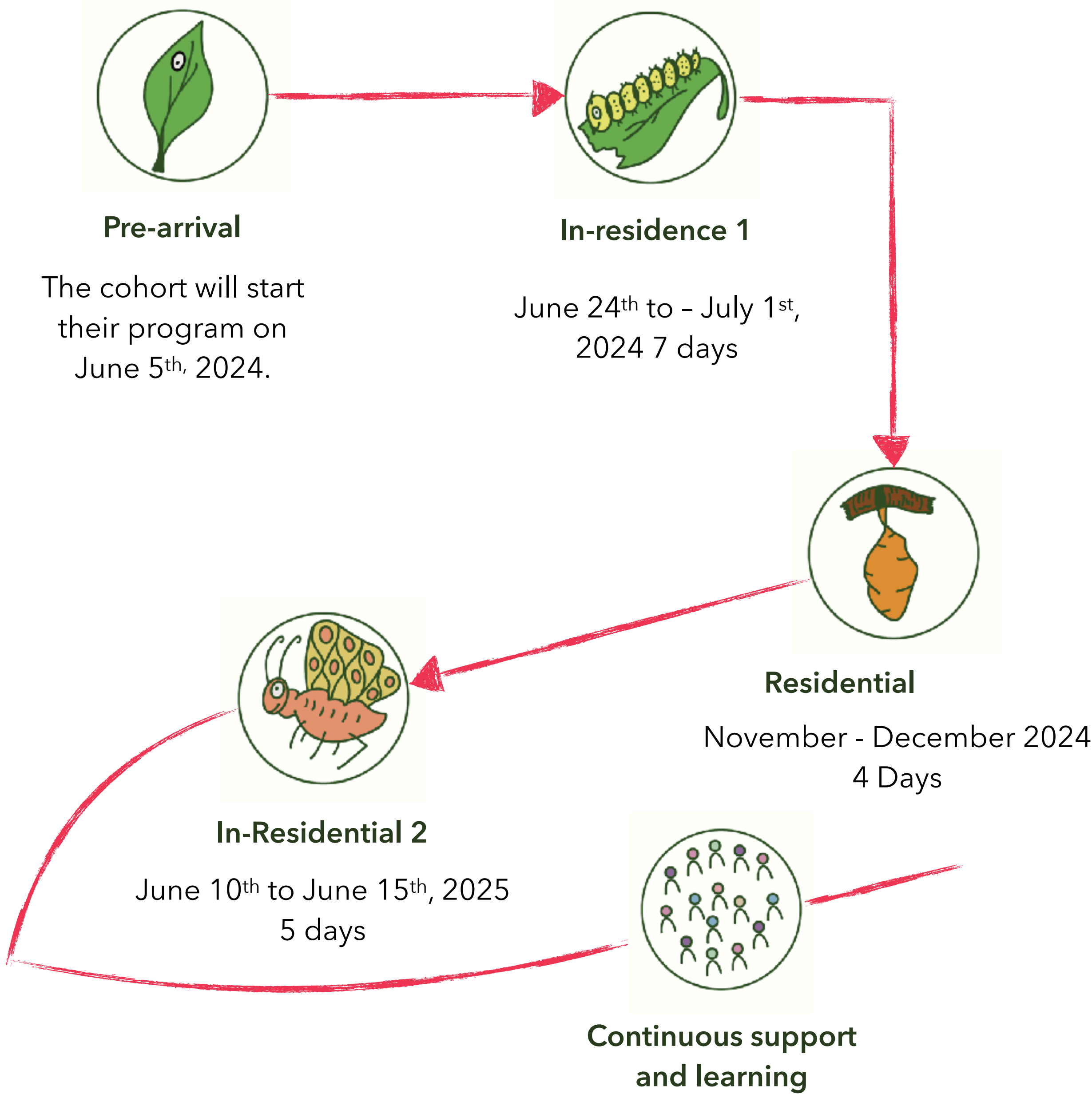
Organizing film festivals and curating experiential learning activities for school students



## Reaching the land

Campaigning for conservation, public storytelling events, and the beginning of alumni journey

# An Experiential and Practice-based Approach



**Residential** is an in-person engagement when the Earth Education Fellows, faculty, and the YouCAN team come together in a lush, outdoor environment to learn, try, ideate, reflect, and bond with one another.

### Highlights

- ◆ Immersion and travel in nature
- ◆ Rigorous skill training
- ◆ Peer-to-peer ideation
- ◆ Personal action plan
- ◆ Photo and video storytelling training

**Field Time** is when Earth Education Fellows apply their residential learning in live projects in schools and their communities through their passion projects. Activities range from documenting biodiversity in their neighbourhood to film screenings and activity-based learning sessions in schools/communities for middle school students.

### Highlights

- ◆ Weekly mentoring sessions
- ◆ Online talks with environmentalists and educators
- ◆ Explorers classroom
- ◆ Skill-building sessions
- ◆ Documenting the natural world around you



# Immersion in Natural History

Educators who inspire environmental action among students have an aptitude for natural history – a keen observation and inquiry of animals, birds, plants, fungi, butterflies, and all life forms in their natural environment. It is developed through lived experiences through walks.

The fellowship training shares stories of discoveries through walks, provides resources to explore the natural world in the neighbourhood, teaches skills such as citizen science, nature journaling, photo, and video storytelling, and helps Earth Education Fellows create a portfolio of their documentation of local biodiversity.



## Seeing

Exploration through walks during in-residence workshops



## Discovering

Exploration through walks around their locality during fieldwork



## Leading

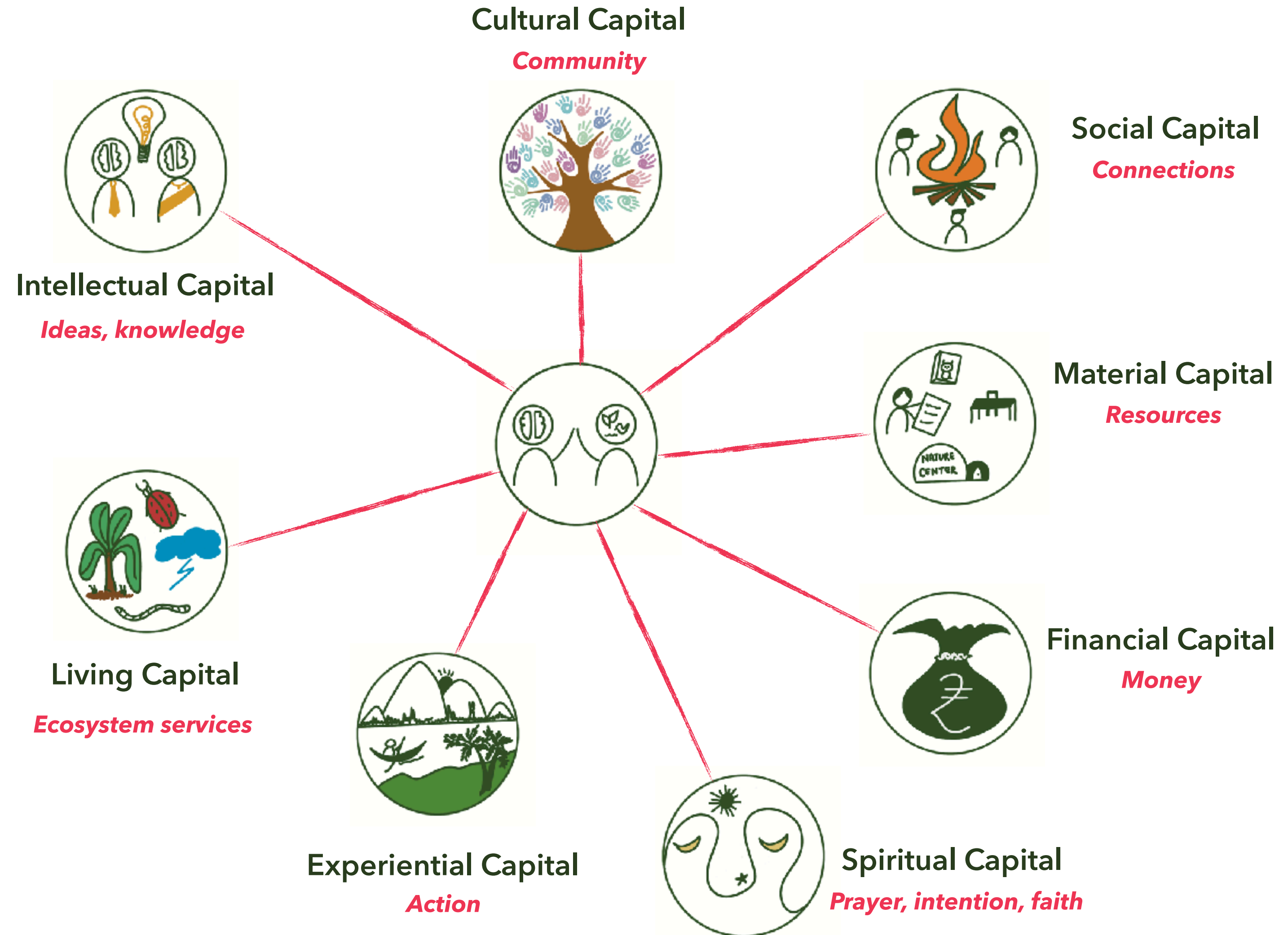
Inviting people to walk in their neighbourhood and explore the natural world

# APPROACH TO BUILD EARTH EDUCATOR READINESS

Readiness means being fully prepared for your goal at hand. Earth Education Fellows will cultivate and leverage the 8 forms of capital to make a difference in the lives of students, natural ecosystems, and their aspirations.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead





# MULTIDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM

A hands-on multidisciplinary curriculum helps build Earth Educator readiness among the youth of India.

- ✳ Expert lectures by environmental and educational practitioners.
- ✳ Mock experiential learning sessions.
- ✳ Rigorous pre-readings and preparation.
- ✳ Regular virtual mentoring sessions.
- ✳ Implementing activity-based education projects.

Being Aware of Self	Understanding Society	Exploring Natural History and Conservation	Manifesting Earth Education
Personal Action Plan	Community Mapping	Observing biodiversity through walks	Organising film festivals
Foresighting	Writing to Think	Understanding natural history and conservation through films	Facilitating experiential learning sessions
Change Leadership	Active listening and conversations	Photo-documentation of ecological and conservation stories	Collaborating with the community
Know your Values	Curating Reflective Walks	Natural history books, podcasts, and articles	Nature walks and journaling
Creating your narrative as an educator	Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to your journey		Forming and leading eco-clubs

INDIA

# DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE PEER COMMUNITY OF FUTURE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

A community of Earth Educators across India needs to be as diverse as her biodiversity. The Fellowship will represent the voice of people from different rural and urban districts across India, with diverse backgrounds of caste, religion, gender, and economic classes.

You will be one of the 20 pathbreaking Earth Education Fellows who will make the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of the Earth Educators Fellowship Program.

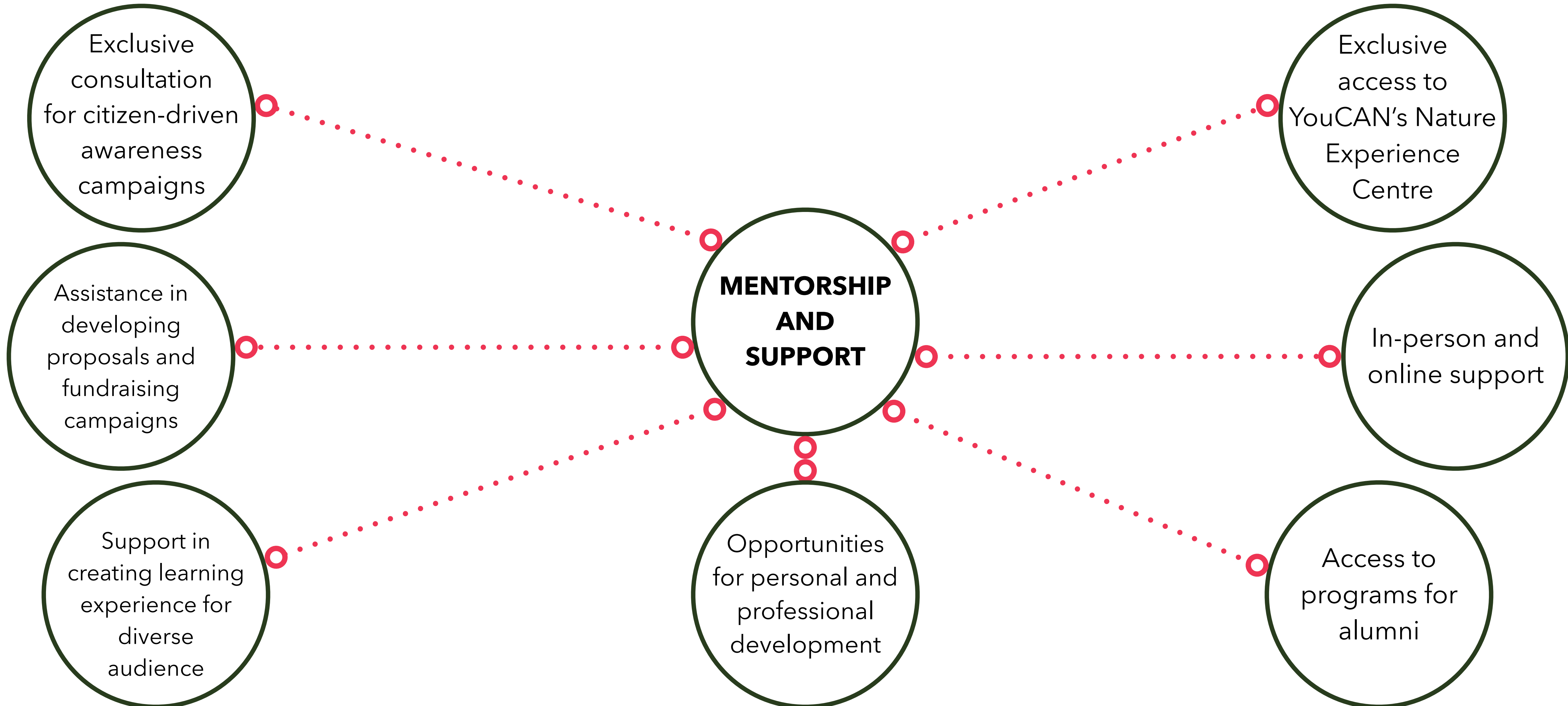
You will go on to join a vibrant alumni community spread across India in the coming years.



★ States where YouCAN Alumni work

# MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR THE LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTALISM JOURNEY

YouCAN will provide guidance, mentorship, and support after the program for 5 to 10 years. You will join an amazing group of alumni who have already begun their journey as Earth Education Fellows.



# WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We believe that the genesis of future earth educators already exists. It is our duty to discover them and nurture their development for the service of our Nation's natural wealth. We are looking for young people across India for the 2022-23 cohort, who are:

Emerging grassroots conservationists leading campaigns.

Schoolteachers and educators passionately educating students about nature.

Young volunteers with experience in environmental conservation and/or education, outreach, and community work.

Young naturalists looking to build their foundation in the field of conservation and education.

### Other Criteria:

- ◆ Minimum 12<sup>th</sup> Standard pass
- ◆ Ages 18-35 years (with exceptions)
- ◆ Basic English communication is needed.

### Duration of the Fellowship:

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### Requirement:

- ◆ 20 hours a week; including educational sessions in schools/communities\*, 4 times a month.
- ◆ Travel and availability to the first residential workshop - 7 days, second residential workshop - 4 days, final workshop and the public event - 4 days.
- ◆ A working smartphone and/or laptop with a stable internet connection.

Equity is one of our core values. We define this as being fair and impartial towards gender, caste, race, faith, language, and orientation. Hence, we help women and other disadvantaged groups to apply

\* Could be after school centres, tuition centres - public parks, etc

"The road - the one less traveled by - offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth."

- Rachel Carson

# OUR SELECTION PROCESS

The purpose of our selection process is to find the next generation of environmentalists, conservationists, and educators across India.

The entire process is designed to allow our participants to showcase their connection with nature, volunteering experience in environmental conservation and/or education, and their readiness for this program.

## Round 1 - Online application

*Fill in English. Applications launch on April 22<sup>th</sup>, 2024.*

## Round 2 - Video interview

*Interviews will begin on May 20<sup>th</sup> and run-up to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.*

## Round 3 - Pre-arrival exploration

*June 5<sup>th</sup> to June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

## Round 4 - Announcement of Earth Education Fellows Cohort, Generation 4

*June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

# FEES AND CONTRIBUTION

We know that this is the last decade to restore our planet's health and stop the climate crisis. Yet, experiential learning programs such as the one we offer aren't mainstream yet. So our desire is to make this unique program accessible to everyone. We invite participants to consider joining this program as an investment in themselves toward their journey as an emerging environmental leader of India.

The actual cost per participant of the Earth Educators Fellowship program comes to around 5.5 lakhs. However, to support people across Socioeconomic backgrounds, we are providing 100% merit-based scholarships for the 2024-25 cohort.

We do not want a lack of money to be a hindrance between you and the change you want to make for a better environment.

We will collectively create ways to find and support young volunteers for the environment, emerging conservationists, passionate teachers, and upcoming naturalists from every nook and corner of India even if they can't pay to participate in this program.

Onwards!

**"The worst thing is to be inactive;  
to not take action."**

**- Nainoa Thompson**

# TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR ALUMNI\*

"The gentle yet energetic team created a healthy environment where every participant could find their niche to approach the project in their own manner while maintaining the basic guidelines needed to be a good educator. They taught me to not be afraid of the path of my dream and to take chances, both of which have yielded fruitful results. I would recommend this program and its diversely beautiful people to anyone who is interested in nature, kids, communities, or all of them"

**- Nisha Bhakat, Masters' candidate, Kolkata, India**

"Through this program, I've been able to develop self-belief and also make friends across regions, religions, communities, and language boundaries. Even with their inability to understand my words, it was possible. I got uncomfortable and that's how I learned something new. I think this will not just help me, but the children and community I'm going to be working in the years to come."

**- Rohit Varma, Jharkhand, India**

"Before joining the program and attending the workshops I was unaware of many things, but after coming here I have become very patient and have created an eco-club. Now I see a difference in my life."

**- Sowjanya Singari, Andhra Pradesh, India**

"I used to lead a life as I pleased until I entered this Programme. Now I have adopted a lifestyle where I consider not only my own needs but also that of the ecosystems that support us".

**- Tejaswi Battula, Andhra Pradesh, India**

"I am from an engineering background but this program has taught me that you can connect with nature no matter what your background is. Since the setting is friendly and not formal, it helped me learn ways in which I can bond with students. Every time I interacted with the facilitators in the fellowship, I learned something new"

**- Sridhar Raja, Tamil Nadu, India**

"The fellowship has made me realize that teaching does not require a certain setting, with teachers on one side and students on the other. In fact, it's taught me the opposite. If teachers feel like they are one of the students, the session is that much more fruitful."

**- Suhasini Singh, Delhi, India**

"The sessions that I have been conducting through this program have made my connection with wetlands, forests, and the urban biosphere more strong and profound. It introduced me to many new educational tools, which actually added positive values to the learning that I have already had, from institutions in India and Abroad."

**- Biswajit De, Assam, India**

\* The Earth Educators Fellowship was formerly called the Earth Ambassadors Fellowship. The testimonials from alumni who were part of the first two cohorts as the Earth Ambassadors.

# YOU CAN TEAM



**K. Ramnath Chandrasekhar, Co-Founder, YouCAN**  
**Educator | Nature Photographer | Filmmaker**

Ramnath is a practitioner with fourteen years of experience conceptualising and implementing environmental education programs for schools and creating nature conservation stories from concept to completion through photography and filmmaking. Ramnath's expertise is in community organising, oral storytelling, experiential learning facilitation, program management, nature photography, and documentary filmmaking. He is a 2022 National Geographic Explorer.



**Sridhar Raja**  
**Educator**

Sridhar has worked as an assistant professor at the electronics and communications department in an Engineering college in Chennai. He transitioned to nature and environmental education, through the YouCAN Educators Fellowship. Since then, he has worked with 13 schools, facilitating DIY environmental education projects. He has successfully completed online education courses with the National Geographic Society and is a certified Nat Geo Educator.



**Ramakrishnan Muthulingam**  
**Filmmaker | Documentarian**

Ramakrishnan's passion is telling stories. He transitioned from being a biomedical engineer to becoming a filmmaker. Since then, he has worked as an assistant director for feature films and pursued event photography. At YouCAN he captures the stories of our on the ground programs through purposeful storytelling.



**Rachita Sinha, Co-Founder, YouCAN**  
**Educator | Learning Designer**

Rachita is a practitioner with nine years of experience designing and administering educational courses in technology, environment, Indian music, and dance for multinational companies and non-profit organizations. Her experience in learning design comes from experiences through the Harvard Graduate School of Education, East-West Center, and the National Geographic Society. Rachita designs the Earth Educators fellowship experience and offers mentoring to participants.



**Roshini Jacob**  
**Communications and Documentation Professional**

Roshini Jacob is a communications strategy specialist, with experience across journalism, non-profit and public diplomacy. Her interests lie in storytelling, building strategic partnerships and meaningful conversations. Roshini is currently based out of Goa, after spending over 25 years in South India.



**Ipsita Sarkar**  
**Learning Design and Development**

Ipsita brings over 12 years of experience facilitating programs and crafting experiential curriculum from pre-primary to high school levels. Her expertise in Montessori and Waldorf education drives impactful humane education programs using creative tools like storytelling. Ipsita's editorial prowess extends to contributions in publications like The Better India, Juggernaut, Down To Earth, alongside managing programs promoting peace-building and leadership in conflict-affected areas. She is an alumni of the YouCAN, Educators Fellowship.



# YOU CAN TEAM

A circular photograph of Aswathi Asokan, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and holding a camera up to her eye, standing in a lush green forest.

**Aswathi Asokan**  
**Educator | Naturalist**

Aswathi has always been fascinated by the intersection of people, wildlife and ecosystems, and for over 4 years has divided her time between research, education, and community empowerment in Chennai and Tamil Nadu. She has been involved in designing and running nature and climate education programs for children and youth, creating nature-based material and field guides, and advocating for local communities. While she is currently completing her Masters' degree in Wildlife Conservation Action, she intends to continue working towards bridging the growing gap between people and nature.

A circular photograph of Harini MS, a woman with long dark hair and glasses, looking down thoughtfully.

**Harini MS**  
**Graphic Designer | Communicator**

Harini is currently pursuing her Masters in Information Arts and Design at the Shristi Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology. A keen eye for filmmaking, storytelling, and design communications, and interest in instruction design, she assists our team in the creation of communication materials.

A circular photograph of Ashvini Menon, a woman with her hair up, wearing a patterned shirt, smiling in a social setting.

**Ashvini Menon**  
**Illustrator | UI Designer | Educator**

Ashvini Menon is a passionate visual experience designer who looks forward to pushing the boundaries of all that visual design can do. She has completed her post-graduation in Graphic Design from The National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad She advises YouCAN on design and branding for communication, and helps us by creating illustrations and designs.

A circular photograph of a white dog named Ripple sitting on a field of purple flowers.

**Ripple**  
**Joy Enabler**

Ripple is our curiosity compass and always keeps us on toes!

# PARTNERS

**TREE**

Trust for Environmental Education



EAST-WEST  
CENTER





## Youth Conservation Action Network

### Inspire | Empower | Nurture

YouCAN is a non-profit initiative that conducts short-term and long-term programs for youth, students and teachers to explore the natural world and become environmentalists in their every day lives.

### Contact Us

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Address: Woodcote, Coonoor - 643102, Nilgiris, India.

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