



The Hilary Thompson Scholarship Fund



Why?

Hilary Thompson was a Director at Earthworm Foundation (previously The Forest Trust) for 16 years. She sadly passed away on May 31, 2019 having bravely battled illness for the past ten years.

Hilary's achievements as a professional are outstanding: she started her career in B&Q (a UK DIY chain) as a store manager before becoming a buyer and then part of the sustainability team. During her time there, she led their work on timber and introduced innovative, pragmatic solutions such as handbooks and training for suppliers and factory managers, translating the requirements of codes of conduct into practical, understandable and useable terms. These tools and approaches have since been widely adopted throughout the industry. Hilary joined The Forest Trust in 2004 and led operational teams around the world; she created and led the organisation's Respect programme, which contributed, and continues to contribute, to the improvement of tens of thousands of workers' lives in value chains in Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Africa. Hilary negotiated historical change programmes with leading agri-businesses, whilst simultaneously running her own charity, Business Trading Ethically, and successfully raising her children, Louise and Adam.

Hilary was a true warrior of Good. She would deal with both the simplest and the most complex issues with the same whole-hearted selflessness and determination. She knew when to say "No" when something didn't feel right, always checking in with her values and with the unique pragmatism that defined her. Because Hilary knew how to be brutally honest, many feared her direct feedback, but realised the value of it – sometimes many years later.

Hilary believed in being practical about things, caring for people and living true to your values. She looked after the people in her teams like a mum, always making sure every individual was respected and had the means to combine life, work and development. She told us once how at the beginning of her career she struggled to fund her own expenses in advance. So, as a manager, she made sure employees received cash advances.



Hilary had such a positive spirit! “Onwards and Upwards” she would conclude after facing a challenge, leaving all of us with no option but to find a solution and move forward.

Because Hilary was an incredible person; because her work impacted thousands of lives; because her attitude and her values inspired young women to be independent and decide things for themselves; we would like to honour her memory by inspiring future generations. This is why we have decided to create the Hilary Thompson Scholarship Fund, a scholarship aimed at supporting women to acquire practical, commercial and international experience in the field of human and workers’ rights.

How will it work in practice?

The Hilary Thompson Scholarship Fund will support women who want to gain practical and commercial experience and pursue a career in the field of human and workers’ rights. The support can be financial or through the arrangement of a placement opportunity in a partner organisation or NGO. The nature of the project supported should be focused on building solutions that work in the human and workers’ rights field.

Prospective candidates will submit scholarship project proposals to Earthworm Foundation. A panel composed of Katie Kenrick (member of the Respect team at Earthworm Foundation), Scott Poynton (Founder of TFT/Earthworm Foundation), Catharina Plummer (Director of HR, Finance and Legal for Earthworm Foundation), and Louise and Adam Thompson will select the best projects annually and validate the funding and/or, when applicable, the placement with a partner organisation or NGO. The selection will be based on the personality of the applicant, her motivation and the merits of her project. The candidate should be a woman, passionate about human and workers’ rights, and with a strong determination and courage – truly reflective of Hilary’s values.

Earthworm Foundation will raise funds to support the scholarship fund and manage it separately from Earthworm’s other activities.

In numbers

We aim to start in 2020.

Over the next 10 years, we want to support at least **50 women** through the scholarship fund. An achievement Hilary herself would be immensely proud of, and an achievement Earthworm Foundation and her family will be immensely proud Hilary has inspired.