

# INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A BETTER LIFE

Since the middle of the last century, Cambodia has been ravaged by decades of civil war and suffered terribly during the Vietnam War and the terror regime of the Khmer Rouge. As a consequence, Cambodia is now one of the poorest countries in the world. In its capital Phnom Penh alone, tens of thousands of children live on the streets, suffering hunger, illness and abuse. To ensure these children and their families a reasonable standard of living, we need to provide help on the ground.

> Smiling Gecko works in Cambodia and is dedicated to helping these people – either in the form of direct aid or by supporting other NGOs. Focusing on areas of the greatest need, Smiling Gecko enables families and children to help themselves through sustainable cluster projects. Its core projects are agricultural family projects, village school educational projects, sustainable garment production, carpentry and a farmhouse to attract tourism.

To achieve these goals, Smiling Gecko believes that migration to the cities and urbanization must be stopped by offering rural people viable alternatives. By implementing promising concepts revolving around education and working conditions, the charity wants to ensure that people can gain secure employment and earn a living wage without leaving the countryside. Smiling Gecko is also involved in a resettlement program to bring people back from the slums in and around Phnom Penh.

In the area north of Phnom Penh, the organisation runs several construction projects requiring regular, high levels of construction activity. The projects are headed by architect and ETH Zurich professor Dirk E. Hebel and supported by the Center for Development and Cooperation



(CDC) of the Bern University of Applied Sciences.

With the support of Sika, Smiling Gecko has been able to open a carpentry which provides nine additional jobs and training places for young Cambodians. Furthermore, five bungalows and a restaurant have been completed under the Farmhouse project. In order to accommodate visitors, a guest house with a kitchen was built on the project site. Known as Farmhouse Smiling Gecko, it opened its

doors in November 2015. Since the number of guests and visitors keeps increasing, there is a need to extend this project and build six additional bungalows plus ancillary facilities as this is the only program that can provide the financial means to help make other Smiling Gecko projects profitable and sustainable.

Sika provided all these recent projects with a total of 130 m<sup>2</sup> of floor coating for the kitchen, as well as tile adhesives and grouts for the bathrooms, cold rooms



and deep freezers, in addition to financial support for the development of the bungalows. The local Sika subsidiary opened in 2016 a new production plant for concrete admixtures in Phnom Penh, so Sika is tapping into further potential in Cambodia's booming construction industry, which grew by 20% in 2015.

This new infrastructure should enable local Cambodians to leave poverty and deprivation behind them and assures them of genuine long-term prospects.



The projects create new opportunities, fresh hope, and a possibility for people to support their own livelihood and improve their educational and living conditions. <

1 Team and members of Smiling Gecko

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