

# SMILING GECKO CAMBODIA



36

trainees and apprentices are currently being trained at Smiling Gecko.

24%

The Cambodian illiteracy rate is relatively high compared to other Southeast Asian states.

## **Vocational training projects for a self-determined life**

Smiling Gecko Switzerland was founded in 2012 as a charitable organisation which supports the needy people of Cambodia with sustainable as well as ecologically and economically useful projects. Smiling Gecko pursues a holistic approach, leading to sustainable improvement of the living conditions within society. Its cluster projects in the fields of agriculture, tourism, trade, and industry are led with sound economic efficiency, allowing them to be self-supporting. Consequently, they will also finance the education and training of future trainees in the Smiling Gecko School.

As part of a six-year programme, the Julius Baer Foundation is supporting the planning and execution of various basic vocational training courses for the tourism project 'Farmhouse Smiling Gecko', as well as for the trade project 'Smiling Gecko Carpentry'. Both projects are for young

Cambodian trainees and auxiliary staff who have not had any basic schooling or vocational training. The teaching and training plans are developed and implemented locally by Swiss specialists. They enable participants to earn a living and to support themselves as well as their families in the long term and under humane conditions.

## **Creating possibilities to earn a living**

Through Smiling Gecko, thirty employees and apprentices are in education in the restaurant as well as in the catering trade and benefit from vocational training courses. Currently, these include: eight chefs, eight employees in the service sector, six employees in housekeeping, two employees in back office and management, and six others (masseurs, yoga instructors, lifeguards, trainers). At Smiling Gecko Carpentry there are another six apprentices being schooled to become carpenters. Almost all of the apprentices and employees →



**Mariya Un Noun**  
Head chef of the Farmhouse  
Smiling Gecko

“My name is Mariya. I am 27 years old and the mother of two small children. I grew up in a shanty town outside Phnom Penh. Even as a small girl I had to work hard to support my family and was only able to go to school for three years. Since 2014, Smiling Gecko has been supporting me with special vocational training here in Cambodia and in Switzerland, and today I am working as head chef for the Cambodian kitchen of Farmhouse Smiling Gecko. I am passing my knowledge on to my team and am still learning every day. I am very grateful to Smiling Gecko for supporting my training and for enabling me to provide my children with a good education.”

### Julius Baer Foundation

For more than fifty years, the Julius Baer Foundation has dedicated itself to making meaningful and impactful contributions to society. The grant foundation of the Julius Baer Group was founded in 1965 by Walter J. Bär to support all forms of art and culture, various sciences, and carefully selected charitable causes within Switzerland. The Foundation's reach has extended along with the growth of the Group, and, today it collaborates with partner organisations worldwide in the core areas of Vocational Training, Recycling PLUS, and Wealth Inequality.

### How you can contribute

Clients and employees of Julius Baer can support the Foundation.

Your donation will be used specifically for the core area of your wish. IBAN:  
CH 94 0851 5072 8789 4200 9

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come from very poor families. Smiling Gecko pays them a fair wage together with supplementary family support. Between six and eight other family members benefit from this aid in each case. In effect, Smiling Gecko's employees are able to earn a living independently, to support their own family, and to offer their own children good schooling.

### Facts and figures: Cambodia

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a state in Southeast Asia, located on the Gulf of Thailand between Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Its capital, Phnom Penh, is located in the south of the country. Since the middle of the last century, Cambodia has suffered decades of civil war, the direct effects of the Vietnam War and the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror. As a result, Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world today. In the capital Phnom Penh alone there are tens of thousands of children living on the streets, exposed to hunger, illness, and abuse.

- Population: 16 million
- Capital: Phnom Penh
- Languages: The official language of Cambodia is Khmer. Other languages: Vietnamese, Chinese, Cham, and various other minority languages.
- Unemployment rate: There are no reliable

surveys of the unemployment rate.

- Education system: The consequences of the Khmer Rouge regime have had a lasting impact on the Cambodian education system. As a result of the murder of teachers and academics, there is still a shortage of suitable personnel and trainees. The education system is seriously underdeveloped and large parts of the education infrastructure remain in ruins this day. For that reason, the illiteracy rate in Cambodia is currently 24%, which is relatively high in comparison with other Southeast Asian states.
- Export: Cambodia's main export sector is the textile industry, accounting for 80% of its exports. However, Cambodia is unfortunately also known for the exploitation of women and girls in particular in its growing clothing industry, without any type of industrial safety or insurance protection.
- Half of the population of Cambodia is under 16 years old.

For more information about Smiling Gecko, please visit: [www.smilinggecko.ch](http://www.smilinggecko.ch)

“When hope awakes, despair lies down to sleep.”

Asian proverb