

OUR REVIEW OF 2022



Dear friends of Smiling Gecko

Another demanding year is coming to an end. It's a good time to give an insight into everything that has happened here on the Smiling Gecko Campus in the past few months.

There was a lot going on again. And I would be lying if I said: Everything always went according to plan. But that's the way it is in rural Cambodia.

Let's keep our fingers crossed for ourselves and above all for the wonderful people here that times will improve. In any case, we are doing everything we can to ensure this, as a look at the following pages reveals.

Thank you for supporting us so much!

Sincerely,
Hannes Schmid



THE TWO FACES OF THE YEAR 2022

We already had the real highlight shortly before the turn of the year: After around 18 months in lockdown, we were finally able to open our school again.



We see how important education is when we travel around the Smiling Gecko Campus. Due to the pandemic, the job opportunities for unskilled day laborers have become even fewer than before. And with virtually no government support, people are suffering bitterly. They are malnourished and even minor illnesses escalate due to a lack of money for the simplest treatments.

Experiencing this is heartbreaking. On the other hand, it also allows us to be creative again and again. Because we know how much we are needed here every day.

THE GLOBAL CRISIS AND ITS REGIONAL IMPACT



In Europe, the corona crisis may have receded into the background in the media by the end of February at the latest with the acts of war in Ukraine. In Cambodia, the pandemic and its consequences are still ubiquitous, or have even been exacerbated by the Ukraine crisis. International tourism, which is so important for the country, continues to weaken and the jobs in the factories have also decreased significantly. In addition, this year there was exceptionally heavy rainfall in the rainy season, which led to extreme flooding. Maybe you saw the bad pictures from Pakistan. We have the feeling that it wasn't and isn't much better for us.



That is why we continue to support the poor rural population on a regular basis with everything they need to survive. The funds available for this in our Corona special fund are almost used up, so that we are still very dependent on donations here - as is the case for the upkeep of the school.



IMPORTANT INVESTMENTS IN THE FARMHOUSE

A lot of positive things have happened at the Farmhouse Resort. Here we were able to use the Corona-related lull in guests to make the facility even more attractive.

First and foremost is our new «Sanctuary Spa». A tropical garden has been created here on 8000 m², in which there is a second

large saltwater pool and a gym as well as 8 treatment rooms. There is a sauna and a fantastic natural stone jacuzzi. Our reasoning behind the investment: We have to offer travelers incentives to make the detour via the Smiling Gecko Campus. Especially if we want them to stay not just a day or two, but maybe five days or a whole week.



Also brand new is our fine dining restaurant, which we simply named «Un» in honor of our head chef, Mariya Un Noun. This is where we will be serving her fantastic New Khmer Cuisine in the future. There have already been numerous reservations for the restaurant and the new «Chef's Table».



Our school has been very loud and happy since this summer. The musical instruments from the «container full of music» have arrived in Cambodia and are being used enthusiastically. The same applies to the many wonderful books that we received as gifts from the Lakeside School in Horgen this year. A great initiative that we really appreciate.





PEOPLE ON CAMPUS

On behalf of the approximately 280 employees and almost 400 children on campus, we would like to introduce you to a few people who made us happy this year. For example, Pen, Kav, Seyha and Pheu, the four young carpenters who completed their carpentry apprenticeship in the summer. And of course, Sheya, who is being trained by Mariya and our current guest pastry chef, Nadine Grutschig. A real talent that we are happy to encourage.



We were also very touched this year by the story of little Chantha, who we accepted into our pre-school in November 2021 as a four-year-old. The girl had congenital dysplasia of the left hip, which left her with a severe limp. We decided to have her operated on at the Royal Phnom Penh Hospital and were always at her side during the subsequent rehabilitation phase. Soon Chantha will be able to walk without limping. A fact that makes her mother overjoyed and speak of a «second birth of her daughter».

AGRICULTURAL NEWS

We have great hopes for the future of our vanilla project, which started in 2020. The plants in our approximately 250 m² test planting have developed splendidly and after the flowers were fertilized in January 2022, we were able to harvest the first pods in September 2022. These are currently being fermented and then we know how good the quality of our vanilla is. Until then, we must keep our fingers crossed, because with prices per kilo of up to 400 francs, a large vanilla plantation would of course be financially extremely attractive for us.



ALSO NEW IN 2022: OUR WEBSITE

Our small communications team in Dübendorf worked through the summer to implement our new website.

We think it turned out well and we cordially invite you to look at the site. As you will see, we now have an online magazine, among other things, in which we will report regularly from the Smiling Gecko Campus and from Cambodia in general.



The code takes you directly to the website.



smilinggecko.ch

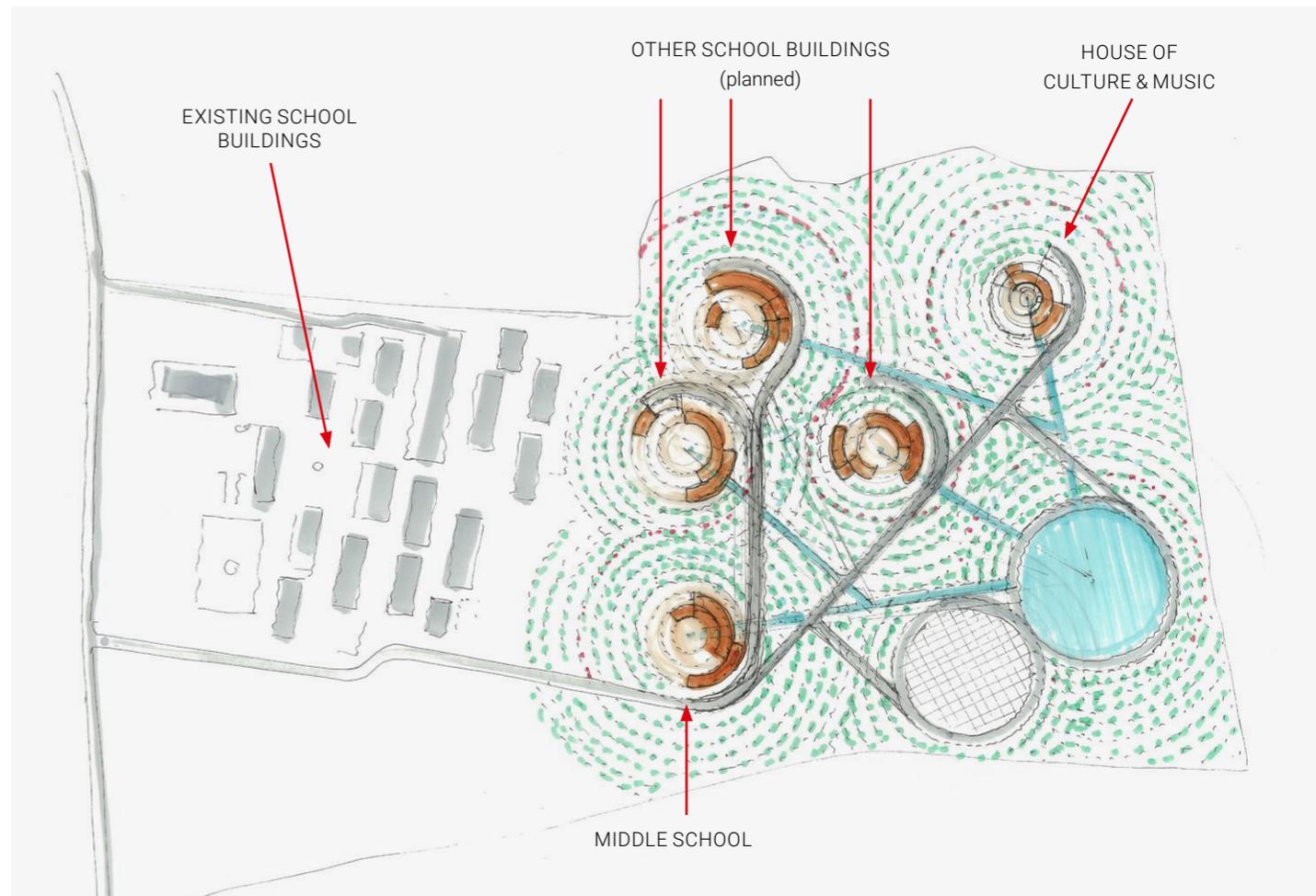
NO LOOK BACK WITHOUT A LOOK AHEAD

With the building of the middle school for children from the 7th grade and the House of Culture and Music, we will hopefully be able to start with two very demanding construction projects in 2023.

The middle school is eagerly awaited: if we build as planned, we can accommodate around 60 children again in the new school year, the existing buildings will simply be too small for the more than 400 pupils. In addition, we need other premises for the advanced classes, such as a computer lab or chemistry and bio rooms, which we do not have today.



The architecture of the House of Culture and Music, inspired by a gong, is adjacent to the middle school, but is not directly part of the school. It is of course mainly used by the school but is also explicitly open to local musicians and theater workers, who hopefully will find a place here to revive Cambodia's long-lost art and culture. Here, too, the country has extreme deficits as a result of the civil war. With all the negative consequences for the development of the nation.





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