

the green gecko project

where kids can be kids and dreams can come true



annual report 2009

the green gecko project

“ Before I begged for money and played cards all night, I did not care if I lost, but now I work hard, I don't want to give my money away! ”

A former beggar, now a staff member at Green Gecko and mum to seven Gecko kids. Working at Gecko has built up her confidence and self-esteem... and new perspective towards gambling.

The Green Gecko Project is a **home, school and family** for 69 children who previously lived and begged on the streets of Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Green Gecko provides **security, education, love and opportunities** to these children through their formative years and into their adult lives, empowering them to achieve their full potential.

Green Gecko strives to **break the begging cycle** by supporting the children's families and the broader community through long term health, education and training initiatives.

The project has evolved into what it is today by responding to **the needs of our children and families**. We believe that this important factor has been crucial in ensuring the success of the work that we do.



behind the smiles

- 60% of Cambodia's population of 13.4 million is **under the age of 24** years old
- 36.1% live under the **poverty rate** set by the World Bank.
- 50,000 people in Cambodia have been **killed or injured by landmines** / UXO
- Cambodia is the **third most heavily mined** country in the world
- 49% of children enrolled **do not finish the last grade** of primary school
- **19% of children** are enrolled in lower secondary education
- **25% of children** enrolled in secondary school are girls
- **1 baby out of 5 dies** before reaching their first birthday.

Green Gecko is situated in Siem Reap, Cambodia, South East Asia. A recently emerging town located in the north-west of the country, it is home to the world's largest religious site, Angkor Wat, and consequently, a **hastily growing tourism** industry.

Decades of civil war, including the Khmer Rouge revolution between 1975 and 1979 has had a catastrophic effect on the country as it is today, with approximately **1.7 million people** killed in less than 4 years included the majority of the country's educated and professionals.

These factors have had a direct impact on the number of street children in Cambodia (estimated between 14,000 and 24,000) and the risks they face, including **abuse, abduction and disease**.

For the chronically poor in Cambodia, poverty is not just about having a very low income; it's about **multidimensional deprivation**. With no other coping strategies, past trauma issues caused by decades of war and conflict are often dealt with through problematic use of alcohol or drugs and gambling, which can lead to domestic violence and debt. This can in turn lead to human trafficking and forced sex work.



about gecko

Our kids

We have currently **69 children** who are in our full time care. They receive full time Khmer and English education, three meals daily, and full time parental care and **emotional support** through our supportive team. The majority of kids were begging children, while others collected garbage for recycling to support their families. Many were also living on the streets.

Our staff

All our staff are Khmer locals, **chosen for their character** more than their education or skill base. Unfortunately Khmer society looks down on begging families and it is hard to find staff that respect the people we work with. At Gecko, we believe someone with **a good heart** is much more valuable than someone with an impressive CV. Foreign staff are volunteers or independently sponsored, and no foreigner is paid from general donations.

Our volunteers

We have had a huge amount of volunteer support throughout 2009 and we couldn't have achieved what we have without **all your help!** The Green Gecko Project is a Cambodian NGO, all of our employees are Khmer. It is our goal to make our project sustainable by **strengthening the skills** of our Cambodian team. The volunteers that are of greatest value to the project are people who have skills, ideas or experience that they are willing to impart to the Khmer staff, so the ball keeps rolling long after they depart.

Our mission

The Green Gecko Project aims to empower the Gecko kids with **skills, education and care** through their formative years and into their adult lives, providing all opportunities available in order for them to reach their highest potential. Green Gecko also strives to break the begging cycle through **sustainable long-term training** and empowerment solutions for their families.

Learning from our work

The **grassroots nature** of the work we do and the small size of our committed team enables us to monitor and evaluate our projects on a regular basis. Monitoring and evaluation is done through various methods, from recording quantitative data, to enabling children and families to evaluate their experiences through interviews and creative channels. We use these results to ensure that our work is consistent, but also **continually adapted** to address the needs of the people we are seeking to help.

Gecko projects in 2009:

- Khmer education
- English education
- Activities program
- Sports and culture program
- Further education and training
- Health and medical care
- Nutrition and hygiene
- Adolescent sexuality and relationship education



gecko outreach

Green Gecko's holistic program not only includes the cost of caring for and educating **69 former street children** living at our centre, but also incorporates our outreach work with **32 families**, along with community development collaborations with other organisations working in Cambodia.

Our family outreach program offers **psychosocial support** to the Gecko families, who have themselves been victims of violence, trauma and abuse. Looking at the interrelation of social factors and individual thoughts and behaviours, we aim to ease families into **healthier, more sustainable lifestyles** by helping them reduce the harms associated with the ways they currently cope with their past and present issues.

The monitoring and evaluation of our outreach projects throughout 2009 has given us a more in-depth understanding of the multi-deprivation that our families experience. We recognise that efforts made for many of our families to participate in their empowerment will take more time than originally anticipated. We have set **manageable and realistic targets** over an extended period for this long term project. In 2009, six families established micro businesses which enable them to **earn a living** through avenues they can be proud of, including a fruit farm, a chicken farm and a motorcycle mechanic business.

Within 32 Green Gecko families... 54% are landmine amputees and have other disabilities. The literacy rate is just 6%. Domestic violence and abuse occurs in 54% of our families. 61% have problem gambling issues and 57% abuse alcohol and other drugs. **100% live below the poverty line.**

Outreach projects in 2009:

- Alcohol and addictions counselling
- Domestic violence counselling
- Nutritional support and rental assistance
- Educational support for siblings
- Health and medical care
- Women's health workshops
- Child abuse awareness and protection
- Adolescent sexuality and relationship education for young people in Siem Reap
- Income generation and microbusiness support



our milestones for 2009

Top of the state

This year 24 of the state’s top NYIS students were selected from Siem Reap to travel to Phnom Penh to receive accolades and awards from the Ministry of Education for **outstanding academic achievement**. 10 of the these 24 top students we are very proud to announce were Green Gecko students. A wonderful result considering most of them have only been in formal education for less than two years. Way to go Geckos!

Income generation, family health and a new female social worker

We happily welcomed our first full time female social worker, Sotheavy, to our outreach team in 2009. Sotheavy’s main focus is to step up our family outreach program, with a focus on **women and health-related issues** which have included seeking psychiatric assistance, tuberculosis treatment, HIV counselling and support to help the families though this. Medical treatments through our outreach health program have included treatment for cancer, pneumonia, dengue fever, dehydration, sexually transmitted infections, family planning and more.

Rem’s main focus has remained on developing micro businesses and **income generation** for the families. Successful family businesses and employment for our previously unemployed families include:

Motorbike mechanic workshop

Pig farming

Bookseller

Fruit and chicken farm

Cook

Kitchen hand

Security guard

Child care worker

Labokatao

While much effort has been put into the revival of Cambodia’s music and dance, very little has been put into martial arts. Green Gecko’s **sports and cultural outreach** project hopes to help revive Cambodia’s own traditional martial art, Labokatao. Once a source of national pride, and steeped in principles of self-discipline, breathing, meditation, natural medicine and spirit power, Labokatao was discouraged by successive regimes and outlawed during the Khmer Rouge genocide, and is now slowly making a revival.

The Gecko kids have been learning Labokatao since April 2009. Green Gecko aims to visit parts of Siem Reap and surrounding villages to demonstrate this ancient Cambodian art through performances in 2010. The children are also learning to play the traditional flutes and drums used in performances. In giving the children this opportunity, we are not only helping to reintroduce a lost Khmer art, but also to increase the children’s **confidence, leadership and communication** skills through performance.

350 climate change bike ride

In 2009, Green Gecko took part in a new global movement to draw attention to the climate crisis. On October 24, 350.org coordinated a global day of climate action with over 5,200 events in more than 180 countries - the “most widespread day of political action in history”, according to CNN.

Along with 350 other Siem Reap residents, the Gecko kids participated in a bike ride to the magnificent temples of Angkor Wat. They also spent time **learning about climate change** and the impact that this is having on the world around them.



more milestones for 2009



Sexuality and relationship education for 100 vulnerable teenagers in Siem Reap

In 2009, Green Gecko facilitated and supported 100 of Siem Reap's most vulnerable teenagers to participate in specially designed workshops through the Knowledge And Reflection On Life & Sexuality Through an Holistic Approach (KAROL&SETHA) program. This culturally appropriate program is made for Khmer people, by Khmer people, and prepares young people to have **responsible, happy and stable relationships** by working with the whole person - body, heart and mind. Daring to break the traditional silence, true communication of needs and feelings is the program's fundamental tool.

Celebrating International Women's Day

The children of Green Gecko and Sangkheum Centre united on Monday 8 March to celebrate and honour the women of Cambodia. Two Gecko girls co-wrote and presented a speech on the importance of International Women's Day. There were also poems, questions and answers and performances to remember.

The Sangkheum girls performed their Tivea Brapey dance, showcasing the femininity and elegance of tradition Khmer dances, while the Gecko girls put on a powerful display of the **strength and determination** of Cambodian women with their traditional Khmer martial art (Labokatao) routines.



Rabbit Island

The Gecko kids left Siem Reap bright and early on October 31, full of excitement as they set out for their first ever holiday - a week on Koh Tonsay, better known as Rabbit Island, off the south coast of Cambodia.

Filled with anticipation, and never having seen the ocean or experienced a beach holiday, many questions were asked, including "what will we do? Is there a TV?", and more surprisingly, "can I bring my homework?".

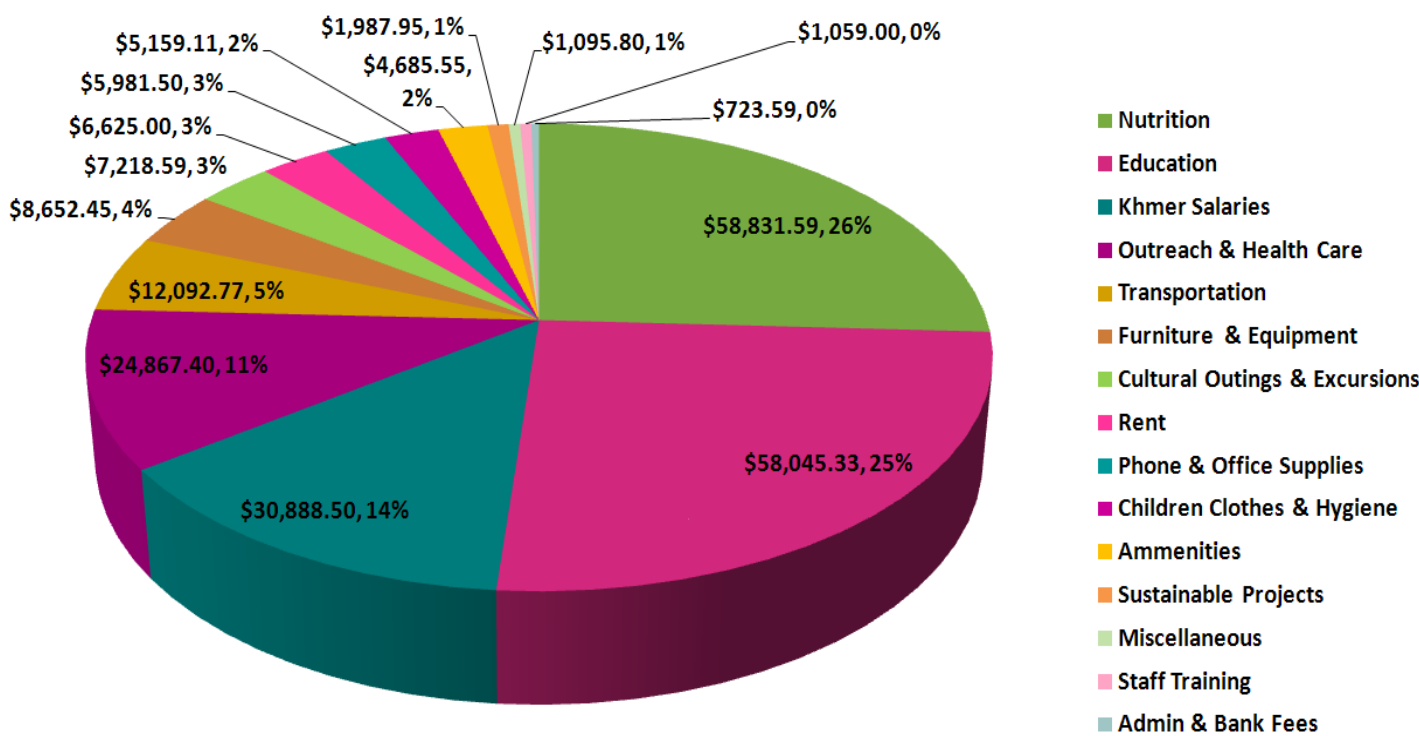
The boats had not even reached the shore of the island and the kids were in - clothes and all! The holiday fun included swimming, collecting shells, catching crabs and fishing.

On the way back home, the group passed through Phnom Penh to see the big city and visit the Royal Palace, all enabling the children to **experience a broader perspective** on their own country, and their own lives.

This unique trip provided a fun family experience that was much anticipated and much talked about upon return back home, and there are wishful plans to return in 2010.



Our operating costs

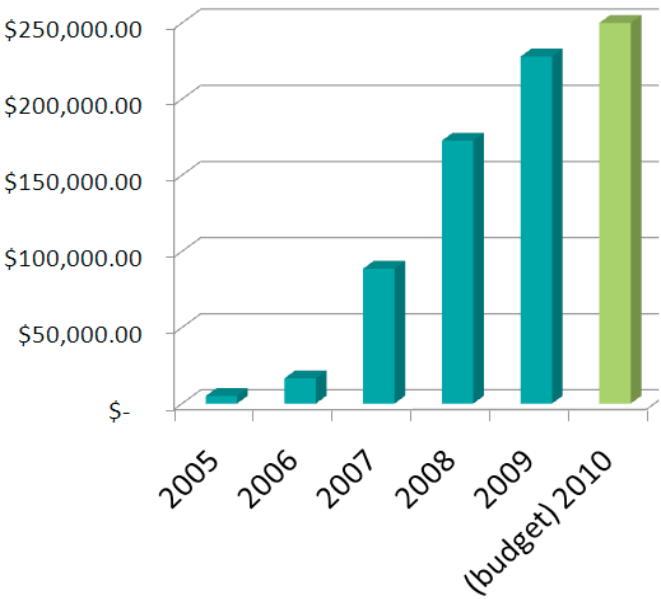


Our operating expenses

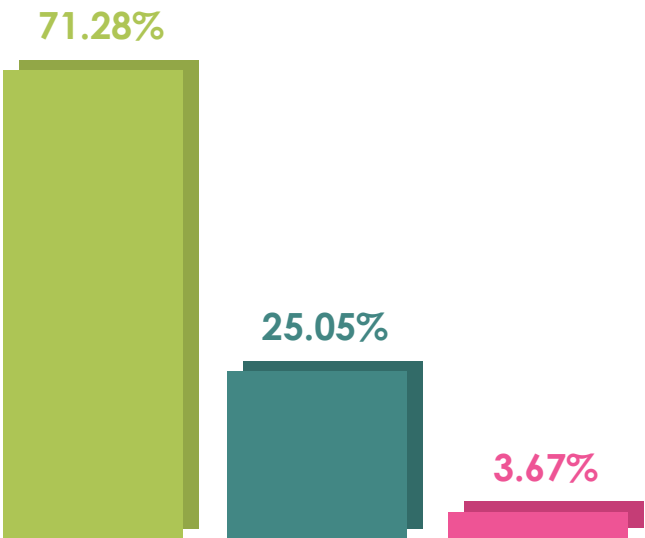
Our four main costs for 2009 were nutrition, education, Khmer salaries and family outreach support. These major costs all directly link to our aims to empower these children with skills, education, and care, providing all opportunities available in order for them to reach their highest potential, while also working with their families to break the begging cycle.

Operation Costs Total USD\$227,914.10
(+ \$3,955.94 building works)

Our yearly growth and 2010 budget



Our incoming dollars



General donations: \$191,366.35
Corporate sponsorship: \$67,235.00
Gift shop revenue: \$9,858.65

TOTAL INCOME FOR 2009:
\$268,460.00

Transparency and accountability

At Green Gecko, we are proud of our transparent practices as well as our aims and goals, and take our accountability seriously.

We are accountable, not only to our donors, but also - and most importantly - to the children and families we seek to help.

Being accountable ensures our work has the greatest impact and creates the most sustainable solutions. We are transparent about how we spend donors' money and have both quantitative and qualitative practices in place to record the work that we do and how it compares against our objectives.

Our incoming dollars

The global financial crisis meant we had to work harder in 2009 to find the funds we need to do the work that we do. Despite this, we managed to achieve some fantastic results.

Our main income for 2009 was from the generosity of one-off 'angel donors' who kept the doors open. Sales from the Gecko gift shop have increased since 2008 - a step towards self sustainability that we be looking to increase in 2010.

Our main fundraising goals in 2010 are to develop the gift shop product range as well as online resources to assist our fundraising supporters and potential long-term sponsors.

plans for the future

Our long-term goals

“ We started to learn so late, some of us will not finish our education until we are thirty! But Tania and Rem say they don't worry about that, they just say be the best student you can be and we will help you all the way. ”

Skill building among children

We believe that giving money or feeding children only helps them one day at a time. Gecko's longer term goal is to teach our children how to 'fish' by giving them education and life skills, so that they become capable citizens of their country.

There is no cut-off age when the children must leave the project. Each child is considered as though we have given birth to them ourselves. Whether it be university or a vocational course, Green Gecko hopes to provide the support and opportunities for them to reach their own goals.

Project Sustainability

Through capacity building: each western staff member has a Khmer counterpart that they work with to build their knowledge on their area of expertise with the goal that the project will be run by Khmers for Khmers in the long term.

Empowering families

Green Gecko assists parents to be more self-sustaining, through education, counselling and workshops and by helping them to establish and maintain their own micro businesses.

Our goals for 2010

Outreach house

One of our main goals for 2010 is to open an outreach house dedicated to the families we work with and the wider community. A multipurpose centre that will serve as a shelter for abused or disabled mothers, a centre for learning about maternal and sexual health, for nutrition distribution and a place to access health care. It will also serve as an office for our social workers with a full time social worker living on site for 24 hour care.

Full time nurse

Our next goal is to employ a full time female Khmer nurse to assist our social work team; we hope to provide a one-stop shop where our families - especially our mums - can seek culturally appropriate assistance and medical attention including maternal health and family planning.

First family free from welfare

Out of the 32 families that we work with, almost all would be eligible for social welfare in a developed nation. But in Cambodia, there are no such welfare services. Green Gecko fills in the gaps and, where possible, aims to free our families from welfare altogether. Not all families will, not even most, but in 2010 we hope to have at least one family totally self sufficient and independent of support from Green Gecko.

First high school graduate.

Only one of the older children at Green Gecko is in the age-appropriate class for his age, in year 12. As he approaches the end of his schooling in 2010, Green Gecko looks forward to congratulating our first high school graduate... and hopefully our first university enrolment!



in their words...

“ Hello. My name is Srey Neang, and I've been a Green Gecko kid for nearly four years... ”

Before, I used to beg on the streets for money. Many of the other Gecko kids did too. Some of us made money by collecting rubbish.

I was lucky I went to Khmer school but most of the street kids did not. They had to earn money all day and all night so their family could eat. When I begged, I felt so sad. I was in pain all over my body. I carried my younger sister for hours and she was growing bigger. As she got bigger, my body was in more pain.

Unlike most of the gecko kids, I didn't beg because my parents hit me, I wanted to beg myself because my family's life was so difficult. **I wanted to help** them by begging at the market. My father also begged but he always let me go to school.

In those days I could not speak English and wanted to study so much but I did not have the money to pay for the classes. As I begged, I always hoped that a tourist would want to help me study.

After six years, **my dream came true**. I was helped by an Australian tourist and a Khmer man. They helped my family and the other kids' families so that we can get out of hunger and



have a better future. They are Tania and Rem.

We all live at Green Gecko now and see our families on the weekend. We have a **beautiful place**, we don't have to beg or work for money and we go to Khmer and English school. Now we can read and write some English, we have computers and learn about the world.

Now **I feel good and very happy** because I have a lot of brothers and sisters at Green Gecko who can help each other. We have a lot of fun at Green Gecko and we feel very loved.

When I grow up, I want to have a good job so I can help my family and other kids who need help. But for now I am grateful to Tania and Rem and study hard. I want to be a good student and a good kid of Green Gecko. **We all feel very lucky**. We are excited about our future.

Thank you to Tania and Rem. Thank you to all of you for listening to my story.



how you can help

Our Gecko friends can help us achieve our goals by...



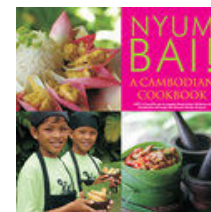
Becoming a Green Gecko sponsor

There are many costs that go into supporting the children and families at Gecko. Sponsor a week of nutritious fresh fruit for the kids, an overnight stay in hospital for one of our parents, or even build a family home... there's something for everyone! Could your organisation become a Green Gecko sponsor? Visit our website to find out how something as simple as sacrificing one cup of coffee can provide food for a Green Gecko child for three days.



Purchasing a Green Gecko gift

Purchase one of our fabulous Cambodian cookbooks or other quality gifts, on display in the visitors centre. You can also buy from our online gift store - why not buy a supporter's pack to give as corporate gifts or to support fundraising? All products are high quality with a groovy Green Gecko twist.



Donating

All one-off donations are appreciated and form a vital part of our funding. You can donate online by credit card or PayPal at greengeckoproject.org. Bank account details are also available for direct deposit donations. Tax deductibility is available for our Australian and US donors, and Gift Aid applies for our friends from the UK.



Fundraising

Some of our biggest fundraising efforts - from fun runs to Cambodian-themed feasts - have been led by passionate people just like you. Fundraising is easy to do and every effort is appreciated. Visit our website for resources and ideas to inspire.



“

We would like to thank and congratulate our staff, volunteers and supporters for their magnificent contributions.

We could not do what we do without you.

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With much gratitude,

Gecko's founding directors:
Rem Poup and Tania Palmer
and all the Gecko kids, families and staff.

