

STONE CONSERVATION IN ANGKOR

Preserving today for tomorrow's generations

Constructed primarily between the 9th and 12th century onwards, Angkor's temples are a remarkable example of Khmer visions and craftsmanship. Today, Angkor Wat, Siem Reap's most visited temple, placed on the centre of the national flag, is a symbol of Cambodia's resilience.

Decades of political strife, in combination with tropical weather conditions have left Angkor's temples in urgent need of conservation. Additionally, local craftsmen and craftswomen lack the tools and innovations for optimally conserving the temples that represent Cambodian cultural identity and history.

In response to these needs, GIZ collaborates with the National Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA National Authority) to ensure that the temples – that Cambodian men and women rely on for income and livelihoods – are preserved for future generations.

In 2007, GIZ established the Stone Conservation Unit (SCU) within APSARA. So far, approximately 40 Angkor conservation projects have been successfully carried out and more are on the horizon.

Project name	Stone Conservation in Angkor
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Cambodia
Lead executing agency	APSARA National Authority

A local approach to knowledge

As a central component to this project, GIZ and APSARA train craftsmen and craftswomen in conservation techniques in order for them to pass on the tradition to others, as oral transmission is indicative to Cambodian cultural heritage. With new training handbooks the knowledge will not be lost as their expertise is recorded and used in conservation guidelines.

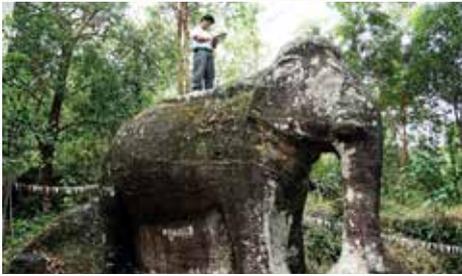
Additionally, conservation know-how is developed and disseminated in Khmer language to ensure its accessibility to a wide range of Cambodians. Workshops allow craftsmen and craftswomen the time and opportunity to trouble shoot conservation techniques and practice their skills with other technical experts.

GIZ and APSARA's education outreach is essential for the survival of this trade as it is the only national conservation programme in the country and trainees work directly on the temples. In the long run, APSARA will be able to train new conservators with the aim to decrease their dependency on international projects.



Photo left: At Angkor Wat students get to know the history of the temple and the different building materials used to build this magnificent temple complex

Photo right: Conservation work at the South Gate of Angkor Thom



Mapping the decays of the giant elephant statue at Phnom Kulen



Theoretical lesson at the vocational training center

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The project has published a training handbook for stone conservation in English and Khmer languages. The handbook compiles the practical work and techniques of conservators while working on-site.

Trainings will be based on this practical handbook and duplicated in other areas of the country. The lectures for the training of stone conservators are currently being prepared and a curriculum has been developed.

Boosting incomes, securing work

Conservation and restoration begin with the art of training craftsmen and craftswomen, but contribute to much more. In Angkor Archaeological Park alone, there are countless temples in need of conservation. This translates into hundreds of secure incomes for local conservators, boosting local economies and ultimately alleviating poverty.

Momentarily, GIZ and APSARA are working together to build a larger Stone Conservation Team with National Authorities. This enlarged team strives to not only conserve a greater number of temples, but also to provide additional work opportunities.

Training local conservators and providing professional opportunities to women and men is a major step towards Cambodia's national development process.

Well equipped for the future

The Stone Conservation Unit plans, coordinates and executes conservation activities. The team also monitors the condition of the stone reliefs as part of their daily work.

Today, the Unit acts as a focal point for conservation activities and provides consultancy services to international projects. Their advantage is local knowledge on conservation techniques, extensive network with conservators and logistics.

And to ensure that the knowledge generated from their work isn't lost, their data collecting systems are kept up-to-date.

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