

BUILDING A FUTURE

By Zachary Intrater (age 13, Middle School student at UWC South East Asia)

I want to tell you about an organisation that I care a lot about. Green Gecko helps kids, many of my age, who used to beg on the streets in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The 70-plus kids are now given food, shelter and an education. And in addition to those things that we take for granted, they also receive love, care and safety. The staff at Green Gecko treats these kids like they are their own children.





I choose to work with Green Gecko for many reasons. One of the values that really defines this organisation is that the kids are cared for now and also they are preparing them for their future.

This year my family and I visited Green Gecko in Cambodia. I was struck by how confident and happy the kids were. It was very familiar to me in the sense that they talked about school, worried about exams and had fun. I had to remind myself that these kids used to beg on the streets for their survival.

While we were there, my family had the opportunity to join some of the kids on a community service project. In 2011, the surrounding areas of Siem Reap were heavily damaged by flash floods. Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed, including homes, along

with the main source of income, the rice paddies. The Green Gecko kids saw an opportunity to help and for months they have been going on Sundays to rebuild homes. On this particular Sunday, we rebuilt two houses.

When we got there, we saw some rebuilt structures on one side and destroyed homes on the other. In front of us were two skeleton homes that were to be our project for that day. We all just started building; everybody knew their jobs and everybody wanted to help including my brother Jake (11) and sister Izzy (8). We rebuilt the roof and walls with bamboo leaves.

Throughout the day, we did not use any modern equipment, only bamboo leaves and twigs to bind things together. In order to build the roof, we climbed up onto the rafters and balanced ourselves while tying the bamboo branches together.

The Green Gecko kids worked quickly and efficiently, they were enthusiastic and they inspired me to work harder. They were giving up their weekends, week after week, so that other people could have somewhere to live. This was really special because these kids used to be living on the streets and now they are helping others who are less fortunate.

The best way to sum up the importance of this project is that it provides a place “where kids can be kids and dreams can come true”. I plan on helping to support the kids for years to come, and I hope that you will follow up and learn more about Green Gecko. 📌

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For more stories, photos or information, visit the Green Gecko Facebook timeline (“Green Gecko Project”) or www.greengeckoproject.org.