



# STONE CONSERVATION IN ANGKOR

## Preserving today for tomorrow's generations

Constructed primarily between the 9th and 12th century, Angkor's temples are a remarkable example of Khmer visions and craftsmanship. Today Angkor Wat, Cambodia'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 the team continues to work constantly on new assignments.

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 local students in conservation techniques enabling them to pass on their knowledge to future generations of Cambodian stone conservators. Conservation know-how is not only developed and disseminated in English but also in the Khmer language to ensure its accessibility to a wide-scope of Cambodians. A diverse range of workshops allow the prospective and graduated stone conservators the time and opportunity to expand on conservation techniques and practice their skills with other technical experts.

GIZ and APSARA's education outreach is essential to establish this profession as it is the only national conservation programme in the country. Trainees benefit from a hands-on learning environment and work directly on the temples. In the long run, APSARA will be able to train new conservators independently with the aim to decrease their dependency on international projects.



Photo left: Handover of certificates at graduation ceremony during ICC-Angkor

Photo right: Drilling resistance test at Pre Rup Temple



Mapping Apsara bas reliefs



Mapping of a Naga balustrade

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The project has published a bilingual training handbook for stone conservation in English and Khmer languages. The handbook comprises of a detailed practical and theoretical framework to assist the young conservators during their training as well as being a sourcebook while executing their profession on site. Based on this practical handbook a two year long training curriculum has been developed and in 2015 the first group of 18 young stone conservators graduated from their training course. Since then, all graduates have been taken into fulltime employment by APSARA and are continuously undertaking independent conservation project works inside the Angkor Archaeological Park.

Further specialisation training is carried out alongside their work efforts while, at the same time, the curriculum is currently in the process of revision. Preparations are taking place to continue the training programme with a new set of students in the near future.

## 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. They provide local knowledge on conservation techniques as well as an extensive network with conservators and logistics.

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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