



# **KHASI HILLS COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT**

1st QUARTER REPORT

JAN-MAR 2023

*The Khasi Hills Community Project is implemented by the Ka Synjuk Ki Hima Arliang Wah Umiam Welfare Society, a Federation of 10 indigenous Khasi governments (Hima) representing 86 participating communities guided by their village councils (Durbar).*

<https://synjukmawphlangociety.com>



## PROJECT SUMMARY

The Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project has completed 10 years of successful operation. The project has mobilized over 7,660 families to protect and restore 2,847 hectares of old-growth, montane cloud forests in the Uiam River Watershed. In addition, project communities are working to regenerate over 9,000 hectares of open forest. In return for their efforts to save their community forests from logging, forest fires, mining, and conversion to agriculture, the project provides communities with a diverse set of social and economic activities. The project is reaching its goal of increasing household income as new village surveys show that 70 percent of the families are below India's poverty line, compared to early project numbers of 90 percent. The project also seeks to improve public health through the provision of clean drinking water systems and smokeless cooking technologies, such as LPG cooktops and rice cookers, to reduce household air pollution.

### Forest Habitat and Wildlife Conservation

Conserving the montane cloud forests along the steep banks of the Uiam River is a major goal of the project. The dense forests drop over 500 meters to the rushing waters of the river which subsequently flows into Bangladesh. Forest preservation is complemented by community efforts to restore forest fragments on the hill tops above the river, creating a wildlife corridor that extends from the 2,000-meter plateau down to the Bangladesh plains. This habitat supports a broad range of birdlife, reptiles, and mammals, as well as amphibians, fish, and orchids, some of which are endemic to this area.

The project has started to monitor biodiversity in the project area using camera traps. The forestry team, Community Facilitators (CFs), and Youth Volunteers have installed several camera traps throughout the project area in order to better understand the fauna living and moving through the project. See the biodiversity monitoring section at the end of the report for more details.



Awareness programmes continue to be held in villages on a regular basis. During these programmes, the socio-economic team, forestry team and project director speak on the project activities and the benefits provided toward communities for conservation of forests and habitats. The village Headman and the local CFs often lead the discussion and provide a platform for the project to communicate with community members.



An important project strategy to reduce deforestation and forest degradation is community-based forest fire control. This first quarter is characterized by the continued dry and windy weather. During this season communities are made aware of the potential hazards of the upcoming fire season. The project has continued to train local CFs in monitoring the production, transport, and use of charcoal within the project area. Additionally, the CFs and community members help to build and maintain forest lines and put out forest fires quickly and efficiently.



### **Degraded Forest Restoration**

With nearly 9,000 hectares of open forest land, the project seeks to restore these areas to improve wildlife habitat, increase the hydrological function of the watershed, and sequester atmospheric carbon. Each participating village identifies the degraded community forests that they want to restore and agrees to close the land to firewood collection, grazing, and agriculture. During the first quarter of 2023, communities participated in ANR activities including clearing weedy species, trimming trees to promote more growth, and taking cuttings for propagation.

Many of the tree species that are planted in ANR areas come from locally collected seed which is distributed among the home-based nurseries (HBN) within the project area. The tree

species planted in these nurseries are: *Alnus nepalensis*, *Prunus cerasoides*, *Exbucklandia populnea*, *Pinus kesiya*, *Pinus petula*, *Quercus* sp., *Quercus griffithii*, *Schima khasiana*, *Betula alnoides*, *Castanopsis indica*, *Myrica esculenta*, *Rhododendron arboretum*, *Symplocos* sp., *Citrus* sp., and *Prunus nepalensis*.



### Clean Energy Transition

Household firewood consumption for cooking and heating is one of the drivers of deforestation in the project area as well as contributing to indoor smoke pollution that causes respiratory illness. In addition, fuelwood burning also is a major source of carbon emissions. To address these problems, the project is working to supply all project families with LPG cooktops, LPG cylinders, or electric rice cookers. Previous surveys by the team found that adoption of gas cooktops has reduced firewood consumption an average of 2.5 kgs of fuelwood per day for each household. Last year, the team has also started providing commercial LPG cylinders to Integrated Child Development Services and other agencies involved in preparing mid-day and school meals for children. This has reduced the use of fuelwood by 35 kgs per day for some.



The project team has also distributed some fuel-efficient stoves and are currently monitoring their use to know if they would be beneficial in areas where LPG cylinders are difficult to refill. The CFs play an important role in monitoring and following up on alternative energy practices.



## **Sustainable Agriculture**

With most families dependent on farming for their income, improving agricultural practices has been a project priority. The project team seeks to assist families and Self-help Groups (SHGs) from a heavy dependence on low value potato cultivation to diversify into horticulture, polyhouse and shade-net vegetable growing, and organic farming. Besides vegetables, other beneficiaries are using their polyhouses for floriculture production.



Beneficiaries are also involved with vermicomposting to increase value-added products to their marketable goods and for use in their own agricultural practices. In March 2023, the project distributed 3000 worms to 6 beneficiaries for vermi-compost production. Others are involved in poultry and piggery rearing. Ten piglets were distributed to 5 beneficiaries in the month of March.



## **Community Horticulture**

As part of the project's sustainable agriculture program which includes organic farming techniques, vermiculture, and composting the project team is also providing high value fruit trees such as peach, plum, and kiwi to project families. This helps diversify farm produce, especially low value potato farming on which many families depend. Fruit trees also provide produce that can be converted to value-added jams, pickles, or dried



fruit. Twenty-one beneficiaries participated in a three-day training on “Processing and Value Addition of Fruits and Vegetables” at the Fruit Processing Center of Shillong. During this quarter, the socio-economic team distributed 640 saplings to 33 beneficiaries in the project area.



### **Mushroom Cultivation**

The project continues to oversee a mushroom cultivation programme and has been expanding this high value production system given the conducive moist, high elevation environment. Oyster mushrooms bring in a good return for local families once the mushroom house has been constructed.



More and more beneficiaries are becoming interested in this activity and many are continuing to purchase their own spawn in order to increase production. The oyster mushrooms sell for around Rs 300/kg. In February, the project distributed 340 spawn to 34 beneficiaries including SHGs and individuals.

### **Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation**

The Tourism Development Team has been busy as they continue to conduct a number of capacity building programmes. During this quarter, they worked on mapping and constructing trails which connect tourist





sites and treks throughout the project area. A training was conducted on adventure tourism for local guides and included hands-on experiences of rappelling and how to pitch a tent. The team also is working on a number of events for the coming year and continues to work with local herbal practitioners to assist them with tools and preparations for herbal gardens.



## Hydrology

The project is interested in learning more about how forest cover and conservation are affecting the water sources in the project area. The team will continue to monitor the physiography of the watershed in terms of land use, soil characteristics, tree species surrounding the area, and the number of households that benefit from the ponds.



## Biodiversity Monitoring

Throughout the first quarter, the forestry team has set up and monitored several camera traps throughout the project area to better understand the fauna that are living and moving in the forests. During the month of March a barn owl was found at Mawlai Umshing. The team worked with the wildlife department for necessary measures to be taken. The team has also collected sightings of deer and leopards from the camera traps placed in Laitkynsew and Kyrphei.







## 7<sup>TH</sup> SHG MEET AND FEST

**16 March 2023:** The SET organised the 7<sup>th</sup> SHG Meet and Fest under Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project, implemented by Ka Synjuk Ki Hma Arliang Wah Umniam Mawphlang Welfare Society. There were 777 participants who attended the programme which includes the invitees, Syiem of Hima Sohra and Sirdar of Hima Mawbeh, Headmen of the villages under the Project area, LWC members, Self Help Groups and Farmer's club, Community Facilitators, Staff members, Youth Volunteers from all the 86 villages, and the SHGs from Ri-Bhoi District.



Some of the SHGs displayed their handmade products and self-made traditional foods and sold them during the fest.

A speech was also given by a special invitee, Syiem (Syiem is the head of the Hima) of Hima Sohra who applauded the Project on their forestry activities and also socio-economic activities. The Syiem added that the Synjuk plays a vital role in conserving the forest and wildlife and requested the community to come forward and participate in preserving the environment.



The second session started with the Traditional Fancy Dress Competition by the SHGs and a special Traditional dance was performed by Adekini SHG, Ri Bhoi followed by the distribution of awards to the well performing individuals, SHGs and winners of the quiz and fancy dress competitions.

## PROJECT UPDATES

### 9 January 2023

The Forestry Team monitored the fireline in Umlangmar.



### 12 January 2023

The Socio-Economic team (SET) distributed temperate fruit saplings (plums, peaches, and kiwi) to the beneficiaries of Hima Mawbeh, Laitkroh, Pamsangut, Mawphlang, Nonglwai, Lyngiong, Myllem and Nongspung. A total of 640 temperate fruit saplings were distributed.



### 13 January 2023

An awareness programme was organized at Rangshangkham village and there were 30 participants in attendance.



### 18-25 January 2023

During the month of January, the Forestry Team completed monitoring carbon plots in Laitkroh, Lyngiong, and Nonglwai.



### 25 January 2023

The SET monitored the polyhouse of Mrs. Elibina Nongbet of Hima Lyngiong and Laitsimkhla SHG of Hima Nongspung. The vegetables planted in the polyhouse are mustard leaf. On the same day poultry was monitored of Rilang SHG and Iatyangshain SHG.



### 1 February 2023

The Forestry Team monitored the future gap plantation site at Mawmihthied village. The site was proposed by the village to be a tourist destination.





**7-9 February 2023**

A training programme on “Processing and Value Additional of Fruits and Vegetables” was conducted at FPC, Shillong for 3 days. It was attended by 21 beneficiaries from Laitkroh, Mawbeh, and Sohra.

**8-9 February 2023**

The Socio-Economic Team (SET) conducted an assessment (grading) for the SHGs of different Hima in order to assess the groups’ performance in maintaining bookkeeping records and activities.

**14 February 2023**

The Forestry Team installed 4 camera traps at Nonglwai Community Forest.

**21-23 February 2023**

The SET conducted interviews and recordings with the best-performing SHGs, LWC and individual beneficiaries.

**23 February 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored 4 carbon plots at Lyngkien Sunei.

**1 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the carbon plot at Lumwahsder, Umlangmar along with the Asst. CF and Youth Volunteers of Hima Nongspung.





**3 March 2023**

The Socio- Economic Team (SET) monitored vermicompost cemented pit of Pynshai Jywa, Hima Nongkhlaw and Mithinmon Synrem, Hima Laitkroh.

**3 March 2023**

The Forestry Team mapped the area affected by forest fire at Mawbri, Hima Sohra along with the Asst. CF and Youth Volunteer.

**4 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the carbon plot along with the CF, Asst. CF and Local Youth Volunteers at Lumlaitsohpoh, Ramklang, Hima Mawphlang.

**8 March 2023**

The Forestry Team and Tourism Team mapped the area in Mawbri for footpath construction to the tourism site.

**8 March 2023**

The Forestry Team measured the firelines at Umsawmat, Thainthynroh, Kyndong Laitmawbah, Hima Lyngiong along with the Asst. CF and YV of Hima Lyngiong.

**9 March 2023**

The SET monitored temperate fruit trees which are blooming at Hima Mawphlang, Lyngiong, Pamsanngut, Nonspung and Myllem. On the same day the team monitored mushroom cultivation at Hima Myllem.



**9 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the plot at Imsotti, Mawrohroh along with the Asst. CF and YV of Hima Nongspung.

**11 March 2023**

The Forestry Team mapped the area affected by forest fire at Umjangut, Mawrohroh with the YV of Hima Nongspung.

**13 March 2023**

The project distributed 51 domestic LPG cookstoves and cylinders to the beneficiaries under the project area at Nongrum Mawphlang.

**13 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the HBN at Mawlum Tyrsad, the HBN belongs to Youkwilin Khongsit.

**14 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the firelines at Mawpalong and the silviculture activity at Mawrohroh, Hima Nongspung along with the CF of Hima Nongspung

**14, 17, 18, 21, 29 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the silviculture activity at Lumwahsohjir of Hima Mawbeh, Lyngksiar Mawkma of Hima Sohra, Laitsohma of Hima Mawbeh, Kyndonglaimawbah of Hima Lyngiong, and Mawkalang, Hima Mawbeh along with the associated CFs and Asst. CFs.





**15 March 2023**

The Forestry Team mapped the site at Mawmihthied for tree plantation.



**17 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the construction site for the footpath at Umsawmat.



**21 March 2023**

The Forestry Team mapped the area affected by forest fire at Umlanglang, Hima Nongspung along with the Youth Volunteer.



**29 March 2023**

The Forestry Team worked with the Asst. CF at Mawmihthied, Hima Sohra to select a site for silviculture activity.



**30 March 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the area affected by forest fire at Lumlaitsder, Mawphlang along with the Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang.



The Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project were invited by ICFRE for an International workshop on “Enhancing Ecosystem Services by Improving Forest Quality and Productivity and SLEM Knowledge Dissemination”. The team had three representatives who presented about the Project: Tambor Lyngdoh (PD), Anne Patrie Lyngdoh (PA) and Felix Pde (FTL). The workshop was held from the 22<sup>nd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> of March 2023.

