



KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT
1st QUARTER REPORT
JAN-MAR 2024

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 over 12 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 Umiam 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 (water samples were collected and tested at pasture institute, Lawmali Shillong) and smokeless cooking technologies, such as LPG cooktops and rice cookers, to reduce household air pollution. This quarter the project has conducted two free health camps providing check-ups to community members within the project area. Details will be provided in the project updates.



Forest Habitat and Wildlife Conservation

Conserving the montane cloud forests along the steep banks of the Umiam 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 through sightings and by 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.

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.

Several occurrences of forest fires were caused by charcoal production and bun cultivation since the buffer between the forest and area of production is not large enough. Fire is known to spread into the project area when unwanted plant material is burned for agricultural production. The team and Community Facilitators measured an area of 16.3 Ha (13.8 ha. of which was grassland) that had been affected by fire from January to March 2024. During these months, youth volunteers and community members in the project area were active in making and maintaining 82.2 km in length of fire line and maintaining 26.7 Ha of Silviculture in order to protect forests from fire. Awareness programmes continue to be implemented to raise awareness on fire safety throughout the communities and reduce the spread of forest fire.



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, 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 and contributes to indoor smoke pollution that causes respiratory illness. In addition, fuelwood burning is also 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. From the year 2021 onwards, the team has also started providing commercial LPG cylinders to Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS), Schools, Village Durbar and other agencies involved in preparing mid-day meal and school meals for children. This has reduced the use of fuelwood by 35 kgs per day for some.



The CFs play an important role in monitoring and following up on alternative energy practices and most report that the beneficiaries are using the alternatives for cooking and that it has reduced time spent gathering fuel and cooking.

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 like mustard leaves, radishes, various chillies, and herbs other beneficiaries are using their polyhouses for floriculture production, including jalbera, chrysanthemum, alstroemeria, ferns, etc.



Throughout this quarter the socio-economic team monitored many of these small enterprises to assist with guidance and to assess overall benefits to the community members. A majority of beneficiaries are doing well and have put the advice of the project team into practice in order to succeed in their various livelihoods. Beneficiaries are also involved with vermi-composting, which fetches a good price in the market and can be used in their own agricultural practices. In January, the team distributed 12,000 earthworms to 12 individual beneficiaries who are taking part in vermi-compost production. In this quarter one individual beneficiary sold 300 kg of vermi-compost for Rs. 9000. Others are involved in poultry rearing for both egg and meat production and several are starting to take up pig breeding.



Community Horticulture

As part of the project's sustainable agriculture program which includes organic farming techniques, the project team is also providing high value fruit trees such as peach, plum, and kiwi to project families. This helps diversify farm produce in case of failure due to weather,

disease, or pests. Fruit trees also provide produce that can be converted to value-added jams, pickles, or dried fruit. Many of the participants who took part in the food processing training in



the past year have continued producing pickles, jams, and juices. During the winter, beneficiaries are pruning their trees as directed in the previous training that was conducted by the Department of Horticulture from Shillong in order to achieve a higher yield. During this quarter, the socio-economic team distributed 1220 Plum, peach and Kiwi saplings to 31 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 simple and affordable 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. 250-400/kg. The project also distributed 440 mushroom spawn to 22 beneficiaries including SHGs and individuals from 9 of the Hima. During this quarter, one of the beneficiaries harvested 10 kg of mushrooms and sold at Rs.



300/kg.

Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

The Tourism Development Team has been actively conducting a number of programs. During this quarter, they worked on mapping and constructing trails which connect tourist sites and treks throughout the project area. This quarter is a great time for festivals and trekking as the weather is more pleasant. The team employs locals to guide the tours and prepare lunch for the participants. The team is also 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. During this quarter, the four fellows from Green Hub continued the “Responsible Tourism Programme” in the project area to develop a specific outline for eco-tourism in selected



villages. They, along with the CFs, engaged with community members to carry out surveys and plans.

Capacity Building

During this quarter, the Tourism team in collaboration with the Fire & Emergency Service Station Sohra initiated a one-day training on “Search & Rescue” at Janailar Falls. A total of 63 trainees including tour guides, CFs and Youth Volunteers attended the training. Detailed training was given about Search & Rescue as well as basic life support both theory and practical.



In February, The Forestry Team organized a training program for the CFs regarding biodiversity data collection.

During this quarter, the project distributed 20 laptops to both the male and female CFs before handing over the laptops, the team gave a basic training on how to operate using laptops for report writing, data entry, storing files and report sending.



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. The CFs are continuing to document the sources of the drinking water throughout the project area for better monitoring.

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.

Below are pictures of some of the sightings in the camera trap throughout this quarter.



PROJECT UPDATES

12 January 2024

The Project conducted a free health camp at Lummawkong Village, Laitkroh Sirdarship on the 12th January 2023. 183 participants turned up for the health camp. Basic screening like blood sugar, blood pressure, weight and height were done for all depending on the age. Doctors from three institutions (Bansara Eye Care Centre Shillong, CHC Swer and Bethany Hospital Shillong), and two staff nurse were present for the medical check-up.



16-17 January 2024

The Project Director along with a few team members visited Gittingre of South Garo Hills District Meghalaya, for a potential extension of the Project. The team met with the coordinator of the region on the evening of 16th January 2024 to discuss the programme for the 17th January 2024 at Gittingre with the local community and representative (Nokma). On the 17th January 2024 at Gittingre village at 10:00 AM the meeting was presided by the A'khing Nokma. The Project Director introduced the project to the community members followed by a testimony by Lyngdoh Lyngiong. Various team members shared on the technical aspects of the project.



19 & 24 January 2024

The Forestry Team conducted a training programme for carbon plot monitoring to the CFs and YVs of all 10 Hima. The various Hima in the Mawphlang side of the project area received training on the 19th and the Hima in the Sohra side on the 24th. The training was focused on the DBH measurement using the measuring tape for circumference and Vernier calliper for certain trees where circumference measurement is not feasible.



25 January 2024

The Mawphlang- Mawngap based Non-Governmental Organization "Faith Foundation" organized an awareness program on tourism development at Mawphlang Presbytery Office in Mawngap Lumparing. The Tourism team were the resource person and provided a comprehensive presentation on tourist development as well as career guidance in the tourism sector to the 21 students taking part in the program. The members of Faith Foundation deliver the inaugural and concluding speeches. The youths and students received a theory lesson in the morning and participated in an evening engagement with the local guides in Mawphlang Sacred Grove.



02 February 2024

The Project conducted another free health camp at Tyrsad Umkseh Village, Pamsanngut Sirdarship on the 2nd February 2023. About 270 participants turned up for the health camp. Basic screening like blood sugar, blood pressure, weight and height were done for all depending on the age. Doctors from two institutions (CHC Mawphlang and Nethralaya Eye Care Centre Shillong), one retired Paediatrician, one retired Gynaecologists and two staff nurse were present for the medical check-up.

**08 February 2024**

The SET along with the Lady CF of Hima Myllem monitored and documented the process of mushroom cultivation of Tyllilang SHG at Umlangmar Village.

**16 February 2024**

The Project Team met with the community representative of Pherzawl district, Manipur at the Loft restraunt, Shillong for possible project extension.



21 February 2024

The tourism team along with the CF & youth volunteer of Hima Myllem went to Lum Kyrphei, Hima Myllem for site inspection & GPS mapping. The team found out that amenities are being implemented in this area by the village council and potential activities can also be seen and be enabled. However, through inspection the team found that there is a need to erect signage and a kiosk in this area as well. Mapping was done for signage design and directions at the entry point.

**22 February 2024**

The Tourism team along with the CFs and youth volunteer of Hima Sohra has completed GPS mapping and site survey of Kshaid Riat Sawlia at Jathang & Kshaid Um-lyuir at Rngi Diengsai, Hima Sohra Syiemship.

**28 February 2024**

The Forestry Team presented the REDD+ Project to the Central Academy of State Forest Service (CASFOS), Byrnihat Officers. There were about 50 officers present.

**28-29 February 2024**

The Tourism team along the Project Director, accountant, CF, headman, two youth volunteers & tour guide of Laitkynsew village, Hima Laitkroh attended the Green Hub Royal Enfield Responsible Tourism Conclave 2024 for which was held at NEDfi House, Dispur Assam.



12 March 2024

The Socio Economic Team attended the LWC meeting of Mawkohmon Cluster which was held at the Community Hall of Mawkohmon Village. The main agenda was CDF, Socio Economic activities and Forestry activities; a total of 10 members attended this meeting.

Thereafter, the team attended the meeting with charcoal makers at Lyngdohphanblang and Perkseh village, Hima Lyngiong. The main agenda is to encourage the beneficiaries to take up other livelihood activities in support of their daily wages. A total of 11 beneficiaries attended this meeting.

**13 March 2024**

The Socio-Economic Team attended the meeting organised by the LCF of Hima Myllem with the quarriers at Kyrphei and Umlangmar Village, Hima Myllem. The purpose of this meeting is to encourage the beneficiaries to take up other livelihood activities in support of their daily wages and 13 beneficiaries attended this meeting.

**14 March 2024**

The Socio-Economic team along one intern student attended the meeting with charcoal makers at Laitsohma village, Hima Mawbeh. The purpose is to interact with them and encourage them to take up other alternative livelihood activities that will lift up their financial status as well as conserve forested areas. Nine beneficiaries attended this meeting.

**19 March 2024**

The Socio Economic Team along one intern attended the Lower working Committee (LWC) meeting at Mawsadang Cluster and Lawkhla Mawlong cluster, Hima Nongspung.



22 March 2024

The Tourism team went for a meeting at Laitkynsew village under Hima Laitkroh for the formation of Tourism Committee. Around 30 people attended the meeting including the village headman, village Executive Committee, CFs, SHG members, youths and tour guides of this village. The headman being the Chairman, addressed the meeting with a brief report of the Responsible Tourism Conclave organised by the Green Hub & Royal Enfield on the 28th & 29th February, 2024 at NEDfi house, Dispur, Assam.

**26 March 2024**

The Project organized a meeting of all Synjuk Members, LWC members and Headmen from all the 86 villages of 10 Hima at the Community Knowledge Resource Centre, Nongrum Mawphlang. In this meeting Synjuk members, LWC members, Headmen from all 86 villages of 10 Hima and CFs were invited. The meeting was chaired by the President of Synjuk, Myntri L. Blah followed by the welcome speech from the Project Director Mr. T. Lyngdoh and a brief report of the project activities was shared by the Office Assistant. Presentations were given to all the 94 attendees by all the team leaders.

