



KHASI HILLS COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT

2nd QUARTER REPORT

APR-JUN 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. As part of the benefits to communities, the project distributed ambulances to six Hima in the project area to assist in transportation to medical care for community members.

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 during this second quarter normally coincide with planting projects, school tree-adoption programmes, monitoring, or training. 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 Headmen 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 second quarter is characterized by the continued dry and windy weather and the start of thunderstorms and rain. During this season, communities are made aware of the potential hazards of the 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. The monsoon season was very late this year. Usually, some rain comes in April and May, but this year the monsoon did not begin until June, prolonging the fire season.



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 second quarter of 2023, communities participated in planting trees to fill gaps in degraded areas. CFs also met with those involved in charcoal and quarrying to discuss alternative methods of income and possibilities of regeneration of forest areas.

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. During this quarter the forestry team distributed 6 species of seed to the HBN owners. The Forestry Team also conducted a



training on making a seed calendar with the CFs, Youth Volunteers, and nursery owners to better understand the seasons and the timings of collecting and planting local seeds. 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*, *Castonopsis indica*, *Myrica esculenta*, *Rhododendron arboretum*, *Symplocos* sp., *Citrus* sp., and *Prunus nepalensis*.

Clean Energy Transition

Firewood consumption for cooking, heating, and drying 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 and season extension.

During April seven new SHGs joined the project. The goal is to work with SHGs to enhance micro- and inter-loaning, promote convergence with available schemes, and train the members in sustainable agricultural techniques and bookkeeping.

Beneficiaries are also involved with vermi-composting to increase value-added products to their marketable goods and for use in their own agricultural practices. In April 2023, one beneficiary sold 300kg of vermi-compost for Rs9000. 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, 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. Many of the participants who took part in the food



processing training last quarter have started producing pickles, jams, and juices. Beneficiaries are also harvesting 40-140 kg of peaches each and selling them for Rs 40-50/kg. In the month of June the Socio-economic Team distributed 1,040 plum, peach, apple, and kiwi saplings to 42 beneficiaries.

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 300-400/kg. In April, the project distributed 70 packets spawn to 7 beneficiaries.



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, the team has organized treks in the project area which feature local foods and traditional massage. They employ local tour guides and women to prepare food for the participants.

The tourism and forestry teams have facilitated the pathway construction in order to protect the habitat of the endemic pitcher plant. The project team has also



been working with the traditional herbal practitioners to sustain their livelihoods and the plants that are used in their preparations. During this quarter the project distributed

items to the beneficiaries to help in storage of their materials.



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. During this second quarter, the team collected water samples from the wells located in the project area and sent them for water quality testing at the Pasteur Institute, Shillong.



Biodiversity Monitoring

During the second 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. On the 10th of April an owl (*Otis malotis*) was found in the project area and rehabilitated for release back into the wild.





The team is also monitoring and protecting a type of Ficus (locally called Sohkyrbang) found in the forests of Masawrit. The fruit grows directly from the trunk and both the fruit and the leaves are consumed by locals.

PROJECT UPDATES

April-June 2023

Throughout the second quarter, the Forestry Team monitored Home-based Nurseries (HBN) throughout the project area to ensure saplings were being cared for properly.



April 2023

During the month of April, the Forestry Team, Assistant CFs, CFs, and Youth Volunteers mapped the areas that had been affected by fire both in the grasslands and in the forest areas.



04 April 2023

The Forestry Team monitored the silviculture activities at Khlaw Rani, Nongwah along with the CF of Hima Pamsanggut.



14 April 2023

The footpath construction at Mawbri eco-tourism site to Kshaid Pher Pher (length of 300 meters) was completed with a grant from the project.

**18 April 2023**

The Socio-economic Team (SET) distributed 250 croiler chicks to 5 beneficiaries in 3 Hima.

**19 April 2023**

The SET distributed 70 packets of mushroom spawn to 7 beneficiaries in 2 Hima.

**April 2023**

The Forestry Team continued to collect data points for the Land Use Land Cover Maps.

**25 April 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the ANR plot at Lumhati, Mawkalang, along with the CF and Local Youth Volunteers of Hima Mawbeh to ensure data points were correct.

**May 2023**

The SET monitored the activities of many beneficiaries during the month of May, including temperate fruit tree cultivation, pig breeding, vermi-composting, and the beneficiaries of the revolving fund.



May 2023

During the month of May the Forestry Team continued to set up and monitor camera traps for biodiversity monitoring throughout the project area.



10-11 May 2023

The Forestry Team took the SIRD programme participants to a field visit of the project area, conducted presentations on carbon markets, carbon estimation, REDD+, tourism and forestry related activities.



12 May 2023

The Forestry Team organized a drawing competition as part of the International Biodiversity Day.



22 May 2023

The Forestry Team organised a programme for International Biodiversity Day with the theme, "From agreement to action: Build back biodiversity." A total of 150 participants were present. The programme included resource persons from the Wildlife Department and Veterinary Department as well as students and teachers who participated in the drawing competition. Photos and drawings of flora and fauna found in the project area were on display, a quiz competition was held and awards were given to animal rescuers, winning photographers, best biodiversity register, and those who won the drawing competition.



24 May 2023

The tourism team surveyed the new eco-tourism sites and herbal garden in Sohra. The area has great potential.



25 May 2023

The Forestry Team monitored the plantation area at Perkseh along with the Youth Volunteer and Asst. CF of Hima Lyngiong



01 June 2023

The Forestry Team assessed the tree plantation site at Lawkhla Mawlong. The land will be planted with about 200 saplings provided by the project.



05 June 2023

The team celebrated World Environment Day with students from the project area who participated in planting local tree saplings and learning about how to care for the environment.



June 2023

During the month of June, the SET monitored fruit tree production, cultivation within the polyhouses and shadenets and also distributed fruit tree saplings and water tanks and tools to beneficiaries.



9 June 2023

The Forestry Team assessed the tree plantation area at Mawkma village. The plantation area is community land where the village organization and SHG members will take part in the plantation programme.

**16 June 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the HBN and tree plantation site at Mawlasnai village.

**21 June 2023**

The Forestry Team along with the Asst. CF of Hima Sohra visited Mawstep Presbyterian LP School for the Tree Adoption Program and assessed the site where tree plantation will take place.

**23 June 2023**

The project team conducted an awareness and tree plantation programme at Mawkma village.

**24 June 2023**

The project team attended the opening ceremony and inaugurated a new guest house and eco-tourism initiative of Destiny SHG. The Riverside Adventure Camp accommodation will be a source of income for the SHG who have put their effort into this new venture.



24 June 2023

The Forestry Team visited the project site near Mawphu and Rngimawsaw for ground truthing.

**28 June 2023**

The Forestry Team organized a tree plantation programme at Mawrapad. The community members from the village took part in the plantation programme.

**30 June 2023**

The Forestry Team monitored the tree plantation programmes at Mawkma and Laitlyndop villages.

