



KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT
2nd QUARTER REPORT
April-June 2024

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

<https://synjukmawphlangsociety.com>



PROJECT SUMMARY

The Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project has completed over 12 years of successful operation. The project has mobilized over 7,700 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 (water samples were collected and tested at pasture institute, Law Mali Shillong) 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 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 to better understand the fauna living and moving through the project.

Awareness programs during this second quarter normally coincide with planting projects, school tree-adoption programs, monitoring, or training. During these programs, the socio-

economic team, forestry team and project director speak on the project activities and the benefits provided towards 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. Fortunately, the monsoon arrived this year during the final week of May, which helped to lower the number of forest fires.



Silviculture

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 13.91 Ha. (2.81 of which was grassland) that had been affected by fire from April and May 2024. During this

quarter, youth volunteers and community members in the project area were active in maintaining another 8.8 Ha of Silviculture to protect forests from fire. Awareness program continue to be implemented to raise awareness on fire safety throughout the communities and reduce the spread of forest fire.



Mapping 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 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 5 species of seeds to the HBN owners. The tree species planted in these nurseries are: *Alnus nepalensis*, *Prunus sp.*, *Pinus petula*, *Quercus sp.*, *Schima khasiana*, *Castanopsis indica*, *Myrica esculenta*, *Symplocos sp.*, *Citrus sp.*, *Engelherdtia spicata*, and *Alnus 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. Since 2021, the team has also started providing commercial LPG cylinders to Integrated Child Development Services, Schools, Village Durbar, 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 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.

During this quarter, the Project in collaboration with the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) have distributed more than 200 LPG connections to female beneficiaries who are above 18 years of age belonging to the BPL families.



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.



During this quarter two 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 book-keeping.

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. Most beneficiaries are doing well and have put the advice of the project team into practice to succeed in their various livelihoods. 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 2024, one beneficiary sold 300kg 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. In May 2024, one beneficiary sold 2 piglets at Rs. 11,000 and in June 2024, one of the SHG sold 20 trays of eggs at Rs. 9,000.



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 to achieve a higher yield. During this quarter, the socio-economic team distributed 550 Plum, peach, pear, and apple saplings to 14 beneficiaries in the project area. In May 2024, one beneficiary harvested 170 kg of peach each and selling them for Rs. 50/kg.



Mushroom Cultivation

The project continues to oversee mushroom cultivation program 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 to increase production. The oyster mushrooms sell for around Rs. 250-400/kg. During this quarter, one of the SHGs harvested 28 kg of mushrooms received on the *1st February 2024* and sold at Rs. 7,000.



Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

The Tourism Development Team has been actively conducting several programs. During this quarter, they continue working on mapping and constructing trails which connect tourist sites and treks throughout the project area. The team is also working on several events for the coming year and continues to work with local herbal practitioners to assist them with tools and preparations for herbal gardens. Additionally, the team is preparing to commence with the tour operation.



Four Tourist on a single day hike to Umsawmat.

Capacity Building

During this quarter, the Socio-Economic Team in collaboration with the Horticulture Mushroom Development Centre Upper Shillong, organized a training program on oyster mushroom production at the Horticulture Mushroom Development Centre, Upper Shillong. 33 beneficiaries attended the training.



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 is continuing 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 second quarter, the forestry team has continued setting up and monitored several camera traps throughout the project area to better understand the fauna that are living and moving in the forests.

In June 2024, four searchlights were distributed to Pyndenumbri, Mawsadang, Lawkhla Mawlong and Lawkhla village under Hima Nongspung for the purpose of biodiversity fieldwork.

PROJECT UPDATES

April-June 2024

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



HBN



Silviculture



ANR

April-June 2024

Throughout the second quarter the SET monitored the activities of many beneficiaries including temperate fruit tree cultivation, pig breeding, and vermi-composting.



Pig breeding



Temperate fruit trees

April-May 2024

During the month of April and May, 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.



April-May 2024

The SET conducted several SHG meetings throughout the month of April and May. The purpose of the meeting is to understand their group activities and conceptualized the Socio-Economic activities to the SHGs.

9th - 11th April 2024

The Forestry Team accompanied Paul and associates for the inspection of site for the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Standard (GBS) at the pilot site of Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh.



16th April 2024

The SET monitored the CDF 2023-2024 of Perkseh village, Hima Lyngiong.

18th April 2024

The Tourism Assistant along with Assistant CF of Hima Sohra assisted Serena Chopra, a photographer from New Delhi, for the recce visit to Mawkma and Umkar Living Root Bridge, Hima Sohra.





23rd April 2024

The Tourism Team went to Laitkynsew village, Hima Laitkroh for the Tourism Committee meeting. Agenda discussed are:

- Tourism Committee members' emendation
- Green Hub Project (action plan and budget plan)
- Suggestions and ideas

25th April 2024

The Forestry Team installed 3 camera traps at Laitkynsew village, Hima Laitkroh.



25th April 2024

The SET and the Forestry Team attended the LWC meeting of the Phanniewlahneng Cluster at Phanniewlahneng, Hima Lyngiong.



2nd May 2024

The SET met with the applicants of Revolving Fund. The team on the day verified the documents and assets of the applicants pertain to the proposed activity.

3rd May 2024

The Tourism Team monitored the Polyhouse of two herbal healers, Mrs. Orti Lyngdoh at Laitmawhing, Hima Lyngiong and Mrs. Elbina Warjri at Nonglwai, Hima Nonglwai.



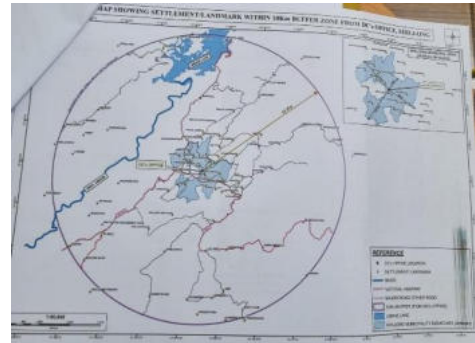


15th May 2024

The Forestry Team organized a drawing competition as part of International Biological Diversity Day 2024.

16th May 2024

The Forestry team met with the Forest officers at the Forest and Environment Department Govt. of Meghalaya for enquiry on the Urban Forestry Project.



22nd May 2024

The Forestry Team organized a program on International for Biological Diversity Day 2024 at the Community Resource & Knowledge Centre. Students from Schools within the project area who participated in the drawing competition were being invited. All CFs, assistant CFs, youth volunteers and Staff were also present. The program was filled with activities such as Interaction, Quiz, Exhibition & visit to Sacred Forest.

23rd May 2024

The Forestry Team distributed seeds of different tree species for raising in nursery at Hima Laitkroh, Mawbeh and Nongkhlaw.





29th May 2024

The SET assisted by the LCFs of Hima Lyngiong and Hima Pamsanngut inspected the poultry shed with the purpose of identifying the eligible beneficiaries with advance structure for poultry rearing at their respective Hima.

31st May 2024

The “District Medical & Health Office East Khasi Hills District Meghalaya” in collaboration with “Ka Synjuk Ki Hima Arliang Wah Umiam Mawphlang-Welfare Society” organized “**Run for a tobacco free Meghalaya**” on the World No Tobacco Day. Additionally, an awareness program was also conducted after the marathon.



June 2024

During the month of June, the SET conducted several Income Generating Activities (IGA) Assessments in Hima Sohra, Myllem and Nongkhlaw. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the involment of the beneficiaries in improving their welfare.

5th June 2024

The SET along with the Project Director and the Forestry team were at Patharkhmah village. The team was invited by an NGO from the region as the guest for World Environment Day Program. The team took part in the awareness march along with the school students of the area from three different schools. This was followed by an awareness program for the residents and school students. The Project Director, Forestry Team Leader, and Socio-Economic Asst. delivered speeches on their respective fields.



7th June 2024

The Forestry Team along with the Assistant CFs and LCF of Hima Sohra distributed Shadenets and seedlings for HBN to beneficiaries for nursery raising at Laitlyndop and Mawkma village of Hima Sohra.

11th June 2024

The Forestry team visited the Range Forest Office for clearance on the requisition made for tree saplings for tree planting programs.

**17th June 2024**

The Project Team attended the Awareness cum Tree Planting Programme at Umtung village, Ri-Bhoi District in collaboration with the Manipur Elder's Consortium Shillong (MECS).

20th June 2024

The Forestry Team prepared for the tree adoption program that would be held on the 21st of June at Umlangmar Presbyterian Sec. School in Umlangmar (M) village, Hima Myllem.

**21st June 2024**

The Forestry Team and the CF of Hima Myllem organized an Awareness cum Tree Adoption Program with the students of Umlangmar Presbyterian Sec. School.

26th June 2024

The Tourism Team monitored the installed kiosk for David Scott Trail at Nongrum, Hima Mawphlang.





26th June 2024

The Forestry team met with the CF and beneficiary from Ri Bhoi Community REDD+ Project for discussion on the potential sites that can be included in the Project.

27th June 2024

The Forestry Team along with the Local Volunteers participated in the Tree Planting Program at Lumpukir Sohrarim, Hima Nongkhlaw.



28th June 2024

The Forestry Team along with the CF of Hima Nonglwai and the Headman of Laitsohum Village selected the site for ANR area in Laitsohum, Hima Nonglwai.

28th June 2024

The Forestry Team met with the school authority of Lawkhla Mawlong Sec. School of Hima Nongspung for the upcoming tree adoption program at the school campus on the 5th of July 2024 to discuss regarding the program and site for plantation.





28th June 2024

The Tourism Team meet with the Headman & Secretary of Pyndenumbri village, Hima Nongspung regarding the clarification of the required Searchlight for the purpose of biodiversity fieldwork.