



**KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT**

3rd QUARTER REPORT

JUL-SEPT 2022

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 85 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 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 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 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. The historic David Scott Trail constructed in the early 19th century, winds its way up the river gorge and has become a popular hiking route and tourist destination. The project's tourism team is working to add activities along this trail, including horse riding and mountain biking, which is also nearby the Mawphlang Sacred Grove, a tourist destination and wonderful example of indigenously led conservation. 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 found only in this area.

The project has started to monitor biodiversity in the project area using camera traps in conjunction with the Wildlife Department of Meghalaya which has assisted in training of setting and monitoring the systems. 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 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. The project has continued to train local CFs in monitoring the production, transport, and use of charcoal within the project area. This third quarter is characterized by the heavy rains of the monsoon in July to the last rains into September. Continuing awareness programmes are being implemented to raise awareness on fire safety throughout the communities and reduce the spread of forest fire which most often happen during the dry winter months.

Degraded Forest Restoration

With nearly 9,000 hectares of degraded 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 this third quarter, villages receive support from the project to compliment the silviculture activities by planting trees. Gaps are filled with seedlings and saplings continuing through September when the monsoon rains are ending. Currently there are approximately 1,640 hectares of land being actively restored with Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) treatment.



The project is also partnering with several schools to plant trees within the communities and involve school children in the process of environmental conservation. Many of the tree species 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 arboreum*, *Symplocos* sp., *Citrus* sp., and *Prunus nepalensis*. These trees are used throughout this quarter which is the main planting time in the East Khasi Hills District.



Clean Energy Transition

Household firewood consumption for cooking and heating is a major driver 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. This 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. To get a better understanding of how families use fuel currently, including fuelwood and charcoal, the project is conducting ongoing surveys based on fuel needs and current arrangements. Through the surveys, the team found that those who had used the LPG or rice cookers found them to be beneficial in cooking time and ease. 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 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.

The project has also started training interested farmers in buckwheat cultivation. This is a high value and fast-growing crop which has many health benefits known to the local people already since there is a wild variety which has been used for food and medicine over the years. The crop can also be planted among fruit



trees and is beneficial to soil health as well. During this quarter, the socio-economic team attended the training on buckwheat held at KVK 5th mile. Two members from the team and 8 beneficiaries attended the training.

The team working with the Horticulture Department on convergence of strawberry cultivation. There has been some difficulty in obtaining seed, but the team is still in communication to get interested beneficiaries help to start in this endeavour. In other parts of the state where people have taken up strawberry cultivation there has been a decrease in broom cultivation which has had a devastating effect on the forests. Furthermore, 29 beneficiaries have taken a training on fruit processing which took place at the Government Food Preservation Centre. This will enable them to make value-added products (like pickles, jams, and dried snacks) and earn income from fruit and vegetables that might otherwise go to waste.



SHGs are also involved with vermicomposting to increase value-added products to their marketable goods and for use in their own agricultural practices. Others are involved in poultry and piggery rearing.



Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

The Tourism Development Team has been busy as they continue to conduct a number of capacity building programmes. This quarter the team has been working to set up camping accommodations in the project area, develop Indigenous Wellness Tourism by working with the local herbal practitioners including the introduction of a herbal garden to assist them continuing their trade, develop agri-tourism while working with the socio-economic team to encourage SHGs and beneficiaries to take part in food preservation trainings, launch social media and online platforms, and set up tour operators throughout the project tourist spots.



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, pear, apple, kiwi, and pomegranates 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. The fruit trees are found to have a high survival rate when protected from grazing animals and winter frost. Chestnut, which is a local favorite, has been performing well according to monitoring during this quarter. Kiwi fruit saplings were distributed in June and are also doing well.

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. The oyster mushrooms sell for around Rs 300/kg.



SHG Federation

The project is currently in the process of forming an SHG Federation to improve and overcome the inherent limitations of small and informal groups, like limited resources, capacity, negotiation and bargaining powers and an inability to deal with the outside world such as Government, mainstream institutions, and markets. The project team has been organizing several awareness programmes about the Federation of SHGs. Lady Community Facilitators are also spreading awareness about the SHG Federation while meeting with SHGs in their respective Hima.



Community Development Funds and Special Grants

Each year the project provides the participating communities with community development funds to finance projects that benefit many village families. The villages prepare proposals for priority projects. The villages are defining their proposals and planning to carry out the projects in the year ahead. The CFs met with the LWC members to discuss these projects and ensure that they are moving forward once funds are released. The socio-economic team monitored the progress of the second phase of the CDF in July where one community had constructed washing places and another had built a lower primary school with a special grant. Most communities use the funds for sanitation, community water resources, and utilities for community gatherings.



PROJECT UPDATES

1 July 2022

A School Tree Adoption was conducted at Mawdan Mawser AEC Building in Hima Nonglwai, where in 3 schools within Hima Nonglwai participated with a total of 95 students along with their respective teachers. An awareness was given to the students on the importance of trees with respect to nature. A total of 100 tree saplings were planted in the program by the school students.



6 July 2022

The team along with the Project Director visited the plantation site of Lumdiengiei. The clan members and the team selected the site for plantation.



8 & 14 July 2022

The forestry team along with the CFs of Hima Mylliem and Hima Mawphlang and Youth Volunteers set up camera traps for biodiversity siting at Mawlangrain, Hima Mylliem, Riat Mawkhan, Hima Mawphlang, and Dympep village.



12 July 2022

The socio-economic team monitored poultry rearing and vermicompost in Hima, Nonglmai, Hima Lyngiong, and Hima Mylliem and gave advice on questions of production. Chickens were sold at Rs. 600 and eggs at Rs. 15 each.



15 & 20 July 2022

The forestry team monitored the HBN at Sohrarim and Laitthemlangsa



16 July 2022

The Forestry team monitored the site of the pitcher plant. The team was suggested by the Rangbah shnong to put up a sign board for protection and indication of the important conservation area.



20 July 2022

The project team distributed LPG to 47 beneficiaries at Nongrum, Hima Mawphlang.



22 July 2022

The forestry team along with the CF, Lady CF, and Youth Volunteers of Hima Pamsanngut organised tree plantation at Mawramhah, Nongmadan, Hima Pamsanngut where 150 tree saplings were planted.



25 July 2022

Socio-economic team organized an Orientation Programme on “Ideas and aspects carried out through Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project for Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the project area”. The programme was attended by 26 SHGs and 48 members. The objective of this programme is to make the SHGs aware of the functioning of the Project and the activities carried out by the SET.



26 July 2022

The forestry team inspected the site for tree plantation preparation at Lumdiengiei.



27 July 2022

The Forestry Team distributed energy efficient stoves to 8 beneficiaries at Nongwah and Wahraw.



28 July 2022

The forestry team participated in tree plantation with Kur Pathaw at Lumdiengiei. 120 saplings was planted on the day.



29 July 2022

The project team attended a photography training workshop. The resource person on the day was Ms. A. Buhphang. The training was divided in two sessions. In the morning the team had a theoretical insight on the functions of a camera, the various rules and settings. The afternoon session was practical on photography.



2, 11, & 17 August 2022

The Socio-Economic Team (SET) monitored the poultry sheds at Hima Nonglmai Hima Lyngjiong, Pyrda, Mawbeh, Sohrarim, Mawphlang, Pamsanggut, and Nongspung. The team found that all the beneficiaries had proper poultry sheds.



2, 9, & 17 August

The forestry team installed camera traps at Nongrum, Laitkynsew, and Umlangmar villages respectively.



4 August 2022

The SET in the presence of Project Director, Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh, and the CFs Mrs Aiti Rani and Mr Aiborson Umdor distributed a sewing machine through the revolving fund to Ms Balakordor Marbaniang resident of Umsawmat, Hima Lyngjiong.



5 August 2022

The Forestry Team and Socio-economic Team took part in the tree adoption programme organised by the Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project held at JNV School, Nongstoin. A total of 370 students and staff attended the programme, followed by tree plantation of 200 saplings by the students.



8 August 2022

The Team along with the Project Director attended the opening ceremony for the new building of Remdong Lower Primary School as part of the special grant from the Project.



12 August 2022

The SET attended the training on Buckwheat held at KVK 5th mile. Two members from the team and 8 beneficiaries attended the training. Later in the day the team visited the Horticulture Department regarding the scheme on strawberry plantation and ended the day with a submission of the list of participants for food processing training.



13 August 2022

The forestry and tourism teams attended the LWC meeting held by the Umsawmat Lyngdoh Phanblang cluster.



18 & 20 August 2022

The Forestry Team mapped the various villages of Nongthymmai cluster, Hima Laitkroh.



19 August 2022

The forestry team monitored the ANR of Mawlangrain, Phanniewlahneng, and Lumniewkor for landscape changes.



22-24 August 2022

The training on fruit processing was held at the Government Food Preservation Centre, attended by 29 beneficiaries. Theory and practical sessions were done during the process.



26 & 31 August 2022

The SET attended the SHG Federation meeting at Nongwah which includes: Treilang SHG, Myntoilang SHG, Iamonlang SHG, Synjuklang SHG and Lumamwsiang SHG. The activity chosen by Nongwah federation is home-based nursery. The Federation meeting was also conducted at Lyngdohphanblang Cluster Hima Lyngjiong and Mawlum Tyrsad Cluster Hima Mylliem.



30 August 2022

The SET distributed 21 chicks each to 19 beneficiaries, totalling 400 chicks.



6 September 2022

The SET distributed 350 mushroom spawn to 35 beneficiaries.



7 & 16 September 2022

The team met with the headmen of Nongwah, Mawsawrit, Tysrad Umkseh, Nongmadan, and Remdong villages of Hima Pamsanngut along with the CF of Hima Pamsanngut to discuss the village management plans.



8 September 2022

The SET along with the Project Director and Forestry Team organised an Awareness Programme in Nongthymmai Neng, Hima Lyngjiong.



9 September 2022

The Forestry Team monitored the site for construction of the new nursery of Kong Youkwilin Khongsit at Mawlum Tysrad village.



12 September 2022

The SET and the Project Director along with Specialist from KVK visited the buckwheat cultivation site.



13 September 2022

The SET organised a one-day training for pig breeding given by Dr. B. Blah to 12 beneficiaries from the project area at Nongrum, Mawphlang.



14 September 2022

The Forestry Team monitored the area for the proposed herbal garden in Mawstep.



15 September 2022

The Forestry Team completed the collection and extraction of images from the camera trap set up in Lum U Mong, Laitkynsew of Hima Laitkroh.

**17 September 2022**

The team monitored the HBN at Mawtneng village.

**19 September 2022**

The SET visited Lawkhla, Hima Nongspung to source piglets to distribute for the pig breeding program.

**20, 21, & 23 September 2022**

The Forestry Team collected all the water samples from all of the Hima and submitted them to the Pasteur Food and Water testing unit.

**26 September 2022**

The SET distributed 1 vermicomposting bed and 500 earth worms to latyllilang SHG Mawrohroh Hima Nongspung.

**27 September 2022**

The Forestry Team set up camera trap in the ANR Mawlangrain, Umlangmar.

**28 September 2022**

The project team organized an orientation programme for the CFs and youth volunteers in the CR&KC, Nongrum, Mawphlang.

**30 September 2022**

The Forestry Team organized a training on Home-based Nursery to the interested beneficiaries.



Biodiversity Monitoring

Throughout the 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. The team is also actively working to conserve the site at Umsawmat village where *Nephenthes khasiana* (pitcher plant) is found. During this quarter a bird was rehabilitated at Nongwah village, the CF of Hima Mylliem reported the sighting of paw marks which are likely a common leopard at Lum Kyrphei, an injured blue whistling thrush was rescued in Mawmyrsiang village and handed over to the Wildlife Department for treatment and released back into the wild, and deer feces were spotted by a CF. Ground orchids were found and documented by the forestry team in Mawbeh.

