



# **KHASI HILLS COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT**

3rd QUARTER REPORT

JUL-OCT 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 over 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. 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 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 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. However, during this quarter, the camera traps are not in use due to the monsoon period. Action is still taken by community members and CFs to rescue injured wildlife during this time. See the biodiversity monitoring section at the end of the report for more details.

An important project strategy to reduce deforestation and forest degradation is community-based forest fire control. This third quarter is characterized by heavy monsoons which lead into the dry season by the end of October. Although the region is home to the wettest place on Earth, the winter months are extremely dry and drought is common, providing conditions for fire. Communities are made aware of the potential hazards of the fire season and begin to prepare by building and maintaining fire lines to prevent fires from spreading into forested area. The project has continued to train local CFs in monitoring the production, transport, and use of charcoal within the project area.



### **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 through Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR)



and agrees to close the land to firewood collection, grazing, and agriculture. During the second and third 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. For many, the reason for participating in these activities is due to unemployment, and some are interested in transitioning to the activities promoted by the project team.

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 *Schima* seed in addition to the several species that were

distributed last quarter to the HBN owners. The field staff are also preparing to collect *Quercus* seed from the local forests. 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**

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 is a source of carbon emissions. To address these problems, the project is working to supply all project families with LPG cooktops with 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 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 orchids, chrysanthemum, alstroemeria, 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 to which fetches a good price in the market and can be used in their own agricultural practices. In August and September, the team distributed 8500 earthworms to five SHGs and four individual beneficiaries who are taking part in vermi-compost production. 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 earlier in the year have started producing pickles, jams, and juices.

### **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. 300-400/kg. During this quarter, the team continued to distribute materials for beneficiaries to take part in mushroom cultivation.

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

The Tourism Development Team has been busy as they continue to conduct a number of programmes. This third quarter marks the beginning of dry season trekking. The team employs locals to guide the tours and prepare lunch for the participants.

During this quarter, the team has organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Bam Niangphlang* Festival, which focused on local foods and included traditional games and dance, and stalls for SHGs to sell their products. Although, the day was interrupted by rain, there were 800 people who attended the event.



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 monitored the completed polyhouse for the production of herbs used by the practitioner and distributed materials to aid herbalists in taking part in “wellness tourism”.

### **Capacity Building**

A Two-day Training on Tour Guiding was conducted as part of the eco-tourism initiative in two locations during this quarter. Forty-two trainees participated in the program. The training included both theoretical and practical lessons. In July, the socio-economic team, in collaboration with the District Horticulture Department organized a training on floriculture

for interested beneficiaries. Twenty-seven participants took part in both theoretical and practical sessions. The project team also held a training session for the members of NESI-RNBA on carbon projects during this quarter. Ongoing training for CFs, Assistant CFs, and Youth Volunteers is provided by the project in order to create familiarity and acquaint new field staff with the activities related to forestry, socio-economic projects, and tourism. This year, the orientation program was held in October with all staff from the 10 Hima present.

### **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 third quarter, the team monitored the check dam that was built using the Community Development Fund in one village. The check dam is on a small stream and will be used to monitor the flow of effluents to the main water body which is used by the villagers for many purposes. The project also assisted an intern from SHUATS Allahabad who is studying drinking water quality within the project area. The CFs are continuing to document the sources of the drinking water throughout the project area for better monitoring.



### **Biodiversity Monitoring**

During the third quarter, community members rescued and rehabilitated a number of wildlife. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July an injured owl was found in the project area and handed over to the Meghalaya Wildlife Dept. for treatment and released back to its habitat. In August, an Asian leaf turtle was rescued in Hima Nongspung and a bird, *pokdait*, was rescued in Hima Mylliem. In September, an injured heron was found in the community forest within the project area. The bird was handed over to the Wildlife Dept. to be rehabilitated. The project team also



found and handed over two abandoned leopard cubs. In October, an injured grey headed lapwing migratory bird was rescued and transferred to the Wildlife Dept. for treatment.



## PROJECT UPDATES

### July-October 2023

Throughout the second quarter and into the third quarter, the Forestry Team monitored Home-based Nurseries (HBN) throughout the project area to ensure saplings were being cared for properly and to distribute seeds and shade nets. They also helped nursery owners to measure for and install fencing to protect the saplings.





### July 2023

During the month of July the Forestry Team distributed hundreds of tree saplings for plantation projects around the project area. Some of the trees were distributed to private landowners and other were part of replanting efforts where fire had affected the forest.



### July 2023

Several School Adoption Programmes were organized, conducted and monitored throughout the project area. Hundreds of trees saplings were planted by students in local community forests and campuses.



### July 2023

The Socio-economic Team (SET) monitored activities of the beneficiaries including fruit tree cultivation, floriculture, and polyhouse production and advised on proper techniques and management.



### 12 July 2023

The SET in collaboration with the District Horticulture Department organised a one day training on floriculture for project beneficiaries at the Horticulture Hub upper Shillong with twenty seven participants from Mawphlang and Sohra areas in attendance. Mr. Da-u-ni Suting H.D.O. (vegetable, floriculture & spices) East Khasi Hills District (Resource Person) presented a brief theory on the needs of vermicomposting while planting flowers, which was followed by a practical session.



### 14 July 2023

The SET along with the interns held a meeting with the Self-Help Groups at Lawshlem village under Hima Lyngiong. During the session, the SET interacted and discussed with Nangkiewshaphrang SHG and Lamlynti SHG about the mission and vision of Ka Synjuk.



### 19 July 2023

Mapping and field survey to Weikyndeh, Laitlyndop, Hima Sohra for Eco-Tourism Initiative. The survey included 5 people: Tourism Development Specialist Mr Kenneth B Kharsyntiew, Assistant Ms Pynhunlang Nongsteng, Community Facilitator Ms Banphira Khongngain and two Youth volunteers of Laitlyndop. This waterfall is 3km (approximately) from the main road and it is very unique and it was named as Weikyndeh because during summer this waterfall is large and powerful (cataract). It has a huge potential for eco-tourism and activities can be done as trekking and hiking.



### 24 July 2023

Polyhouse installation was started for Kong Elbina Warjri, Herbal Healer, at Ummawiong Village, Hima Nonglwai for growing medicinal plants. Dimension of 18x20 ft polyhouse installation at her home garden.



### 25 July 2023

The Forestry Team attended the LWC meeting in Phaniewlahneng. Three villages of the cluster took part in the meeting where important topics like health camp, CDG, ANR, forest fire, etc. were discussed.



### 27 July 2023

The SET and Forestry Team attended the LWC meeting of Laitmawhing Cluster, under Hima Lyngiong. The agenda included: re-election of President and bank operator, Community Development Fund, LPG and rice cookers, tourism activities, forestry activities, and socio-economic activities. Thereafter, the SET along with the Project Director visited various activities under Hima Lyngiong.





### August 2023

The Forestry Team visited the nursery of social forestry of the Gov't of Meghalaya for acquiring tree saplings for various plantation programmes.



### August-September 2023

Throughout August and September the SET conducted grading assessments of the SHGs in order to assess the group performance based on their maintenance of bookkeeping, records, and activities.



### August 2023

During the month of August, the project team conducted plantation programs throughout the project area, including replacement plantings of trees which had been affected by fire.



### 01 August 2023

A field survey to three villages of Hima Nongspung (Mawsadang, Lawkhla and Pynden-umbri took place for tourism initiatives (camping and horse racing activities). The field survey included five people: Tourism Development Specialist Mr Kenneth B Kharsyntiew, Assistant Ms Pynhunlang Nongsteng, Headman, CF Mr Bimdorsing Rani, and two youth volunteers of Mawsadang, Hima Nongspung. From the field survey as well as from analysing the possible attractions and resources, the tourism team found that these three areas has a huge potential for Eco-tourism initiative and that we the tourism team along with the community involvement we will initiate seasonal camping in these three areas started from November-March as well as to revive back the horse racing activities that existed during the British rule till the year 1998. The particular ground or field for horse racing was entitled as "Madan Lynter".



### 02 August 2023

The SET organised the orientaton programme for Self Help Groups (SHGs) at Wahumlawbah village, under Hima Mawphlang. All together two SHGs took part in this programme. The purpose of this programme is to make the SHGs aware of the activities carried on by the SET.



### **03 August 2023**

The SET and Forestry Team attended the LWC meeting of Umlangmar Cluster, under Hima Nongspung. Agenda items included: Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) and Community Development Grants.



### **05 August 2023**

The Forestry Team attended the LWC meeting of Mawkohmon-Mission Cluster held in Mawkohmon, Hima Mawphlang.



### **07 August 2023**

The Forestry Team along with the Headman of Nongrum Village discussed the Village Management Plan of Nongrum village, Hima Mawphlang in the presence of the CF and Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang.



### **08 August 2023**

The Tourism Team went for follow up visit and monitored the polyhouse of Kong Elbina Warjri at Um-mawiong village, Hima Nonglwai. The polyhouse was completed by the end of the month.



### **17 August 2023**

The Forestry Team along with the CF of Mawbeh mapped the area of silviculture activity (4.2 Ha) at Lumkmai, Synrangshohnoh Hima Mawbeh.



### **24-25 August 2023**

The organisation organised two days Training on Tour guiding for Eco-tourism initiative at Mawbeh, Hima Mawbeh. On the first day of the training, 25 tour guides attended the training along with the CFs and the village secretary. Mr Gerald Lyngkhoi was the resource person/expert. On this entire day the tour guides were given theory sessions from the tourism team and the resource person. On the second day, the tour guides had a practical training in the provided field (Mawbeh) and the resource person, Mr Gerald Lyngkhoi, taught and trained them about equipment. The training program was closed by the Project Director with certificate distribution to all the tour guides.





### 01 September 2023

The Tourism Team prepared for the arrival of two interns (Green Hub, Tezpur, Assam: Mr Khiupanang Gangmei & Mr Themkhanmung Humao) by visiting and monitoring the house for their internship period. Successively, the team picked up the interns from Shillong and had their first meeting with the Project Director before the team escorted them to the project area in Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh.



### 07 September 2023

The Forestry Team visited the sacred grove of Swer and Sohrarim villages as part of the research work for the Associate Press on traditional beliefs in relation to sacred groves.



### 14 September 2023

The SET visited Eco-Village-1 and Eco-Village-2 vermicomposting unit to monitor the overall progress of the compost. It was observed that the beneficiaries produced approximately 300 kgs and also promote organic farming by utilising the vermicompost.



### 14-15 September 2023

The The project team organised the two days Training on Tour Guiding for the Eco-tourism Initiative at Khongsit, Mawlum Tyrsad, Hima Myllem. 17 tour guides attended the training Community Facilitators from Hima Lyngiong and Hima Myllem also were present and Mr Gerald Lyngkhai was the resource person/expert conducting the training. The tour guides were given theory sessions from the tourism team and the resource person. On day 2 of the training programme, the tour guides had practical training in the field (Khongsit, Mawlum Tyrsad) and the resource person, Mr Gerald Lyngkhai, taught and trained them about the importance of adventure equipment and how to use them. The training program was closed by the Project Director with certificate distribution to all the tour guides in the presence of the Headman from Mawlum Tyrsad.



### **20 September 2023**

The SET distributed 210 packets of mushroom spawn, in which 10 packets were given to each beneficiary of Eco-village-3 at Kyrdemkhla village under Hima Laitkroh.



### **22 September 2023**

The SET distributed 4,000 earth worms to the beneficiaries of Hima Mawbeh, Laitkroh, Mawphlang, and Sohra.



### **28 September 2023**

The project team organized and held a Health Camp at the Church of God Secondary School in Phanniewlah, Hima Lyngiong. The programme was in collaboration with the Health Dept. of the Govt. of Meghalaya. Eleven doctors with various specializations conducted the evaluations and 500 registered participants received check-ups.



### **30 September 2023**

The Tourism Team organised the Explore the Untamed Beauty trekking program from Mawphlang to Umsawmat, Lyngdoh Phanblang, Hima Lyngiong. Four tourists participated in the trek with the help of two youth volunteers and 1 tour guide from Hima Lyngiong. The package of this trek included refreshments, lunch, tour guide which was charged 450 Rupees per person. The exciting parts of the trek are the quaint villages and hamlets with stunning views of the Lawsynrui and the impression of the giant footprint. The trek tremendously delighted the tourists and it met their satisfaction.



### **06 October 2023**

The project team organized an orientation programme for the youth volunteers and CFs of the project. A total of 15 CFs and 104 youth volunteers attended the programme. The workshop focused on the deliberation of the various activities of the project, with compliances to the norms and working protocol of the project.





### 12 October 2023

The Forestry Team met with the CF of Hima Mawbeh to inspect the ANR mapping at Mawkalang, Hima Mawbeh.



### 19 October 2023

The Forestry Team along with the Asst. CF of Hima Lyngiong monitored the fire-lines (1.5 km) at Lawkyntang Thainthynroh, Hima Lyngiong which had been completed by the Local Youth Volunteers of Hima Lyngiong.



### 25 October 2023

the Bam-Niang Phlang Festival 2023 organised by the KHCPR REDD+ Project was held at Madan-lasiat kai, Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong. This festival celebrates the transformation of the “Niang-Phlang” (grass caterpillar) into a revered local delicacy. This vibrant festival is a cultural extravaganza that brings communities together to honor the unique culinary tradition. During this event, locals showcase diverse recipes, from traditional preparations to innovative culinary creations. The festival often includes cultural performances, games, creating a lively atmosphere that highlights the significance of this local cuisine. It serves as a testament to the rich cultural tapestry that weaves together nature, tradition, and the culinary arts.

The first session started from 11am – 12:30pm in which the Deputy Commissioner of the East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya was the Chief Guest. Officially, PWD Engineers, representatives of Meghalayan Age Ltd., Block Development Officer of Mawphlang and SYNJUK members were present. Institute of Hotel Management Shillong were not able to attend the event however they bestowed millet food snacks in cooperation and collaboration. Nevertheless, the formal session was hosted by the Community Facilitator of Hima Lyngiong, the Headman, the KHCPR Project Director and the DC delivered their speeches as well. According to the registration a total of approximately 800 people attended the event. Activities included in this event were Mawpoin (a traditional game played by women), traditional fashion show, horse riding, cycling, trekking and local cuisine provided by the 23 SHGs. Khasi traditional attire was also showcased by Destiny SHG. Overall the festival had a favourable and successful outcome.





### 31 October 2023

The tourism specialist along with four Community Facilitators Bah Lewis Nongbri, Bah Aiborson Umdor, Bah Alanchestar Kharbhoi and Bah Bimdorsing Nongbet went for the Stake Holder Consultation workshop at Pinewood Banquet, Shillong, hosted by the Tourism Department, Government of Meghalaya.

