



KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT
3rd QUARTER REPORT
July-September 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 during this quarter and tested for quality) and smokeless cooking technologies, such as LPG cooktops and rice cookers, to reduce household air pollution. During this quarter the project has conducted a free medical check-up 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 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 third 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. During school programs students are taught the importance of conservation of forests and the local ecosystem.



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 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. 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 charcoal production or quarrying 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 held a training for nursery owners, collected saplings for transplantation, distributed supplies for sapling production, and monitored the nurseries. 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., *Engelhardtia 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 continued distributing more than 100 LPG connections to female beneficiaries who are above 18 years of age and belong to the families below the poverty line (BPL).



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 chilies, and herbs other beneficiaries are using their polyhouses for floriculture production, including jalbera, chrysanthemum, alstroemeria, ferns, and ornamental plants which fetch a good price among customers.

During this quarter, the Project distributed power tillers to Hima Nongspung (2), Hima Nonglwai (1) and Hima Mylliem (1) and 2 chaff grass cutters to Hima Nongkhlaw and Mawkma village, Hima Sohra. The purpose of distributing these tools is to enhance farming efficiency by providing versatile, mechanized solutions for soil preparation and crop residue management (other than burning).



Throughout this quarter the Socio-economic team monitored many of the 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. Others are involved in poultry rearing for both egg and meat production and several are starting to take up pig breeding. In August 2024, one beneficiary sold 15 trays of eggs at Rs. 5,600 and one beneficiary sold 14kg of beans at Rs. 1,400.



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 this quarter, the Socio-economic team distributed 260 Kiwi saplings to 15 beneficiaries and 500 *Myrica esculenta* saplings to 26 beneficiaries across the 10 Hima.



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 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 actively conducting several programs. During this quarter, the team organized an Awareness cum Orientation Program for the Tour Guides of the “Mawphlang Tour Guide Committee” as part of the ‘Youth Counselling and Rehabilitation Programmes’ sponsored by the Government of Meghalaya under CMYDS 2021-22.

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 for the upcoming Bam-Niangphlang festival featuring local delicacies which will be on the 19th and the 26th October 2024 at Sohrarim, Hima Nongkhlaw and Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong respectively.

Capacity Building

During this quarter, the socio-economic team in collaboration with the Horticulture Mushroom Development Centre Upper Shillong, organized a training program on mushroom cultivation at the Horticulture Mushroom Development Centre, Upper Shillong. Forty-two beneficiaries attended the training.



The socio-economic team organized a training on poultry rearing to 36 beneficiaries from across the 10 Hima before distributing the chicks. The resource person was Dr. B.K. Blah (Veterinarian).



A one-day training program on vermi-culture was organized by the socio-economic team at the Community Resource & Knowledge Centre, Nongrum. This training was provided to 40 beneficiaries from across the 10 Hima.



The forestry team organized a one-day training program on Home Based Nursery, where discussion on tree species and methods of raising, documentation of work and accounting for sales were taught during the training. A total of 29 participants took part in the training. The training was given to both newly interested participants as well as experienced nursery owners.



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. During this quarter, the forestry team collected drinking water samples from various locations across the 10 Hima for testing at the State Lab for Food and Water Testing, Govt. of Meghalaya. The CFs are also continuing to document the sources of the drinking water throughout the project area for better monitoring.



Biodiversity Monitoring

Throughout the third quarter, the forestry team continued to set up and monitor several camera traps in the project area to understand the movements of fauna in the forests.

PROJECT UPDATES for Quarter 3, July-September 2024

The forestry team monitored tree plantation sites and distributed supplies to home-based Nurseries (HBN) throughout the project area to ensure saplings were being cared for properly. Additionally, the Team monitored silviculture and ANR sites.



The socio-economic team (SET) monitored the activities of many beneficiaries, including Kiwi, pig breeding, poultry rearing, pig farming and vermi-composting.



The tourism development team held meetings regarding the Bam-Niangphlang Festival 2024 which will be on the 19th and the 26th of October 2024 at Sohrarim, Hima Nongkhlaw and Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong respectively.



July 2024

Throughout the month of July, the forestry team transported tree saplings from HBN to private land owners across the 10 Hima.



4th July 2024

The forestry team had a meeting with the traditional herbal healers of the Project area. The team collected information from the traditional healers with regards to registration and mandate on cost of treatment. A total of 56 herbal healers attended the program.



5th July 2024

The forestry team organized a tree adoption program at Lawkhla Mawlong Sec. School, Hima Nongspung. The forestry, socio-economic and tourism teams conveyed the importance of conserving the environment to the students. A total of 110 students attended the program and about 50 tree saplings were planted at the school campus.



8th July 2024

The forestry team, socio-economic team, and the Project Director attended the Awareness Programme conducted by Ka Synjuk at Swer Village, Hima Sohra. The CF's of Hima Sohra, Sordar and Executive members of Swer Village were also in attendance. The Project Director briefly described the purpose, goals, and various activities implemented by the Project. Thirty-six people (30 female and 6 male) attended the program.



On the same day, the tourism team, the forestry team and the accountant inspected the site at Laitmawsiang, Sohra, a new tourist attraction named "Ri Skai". The team mapped the trail and sites for tourism activity.



12th July 2024

The SET conducted SHG meetings at Umsawmat village and Lyngdohphanblang village, Hima Lyngiong. They discussed the activities initiated by the group and informed them regarding the SET activities carried out by the project. Twenty members from 5 SHGs attended the meetings.

**12th & 13th July 2024**

The tourism team assisted the DTHM 2nd semester students on a 2 days exposure trip to Lyngkienwar, IF-Trout farm along with Mr. Banlam Marbaniang an aqua-expert and entrepreneur. On day 2, they went for a short hike to Lum Dorbar Ki Ksuid in Umsamwat village, Hima Lyngiong. Later that day, an awareness program was held with the community members of the village on eco-tourism. The program ended with a presentation by the students.

**16th July 2024**

The tourism team distributed sign boards to Nongrum, Hima Mawphlang for the David Scott Trail; Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong for the Trekking trail to Lum-Dorbar Ki Ksuid & Lad Mawphlang, Hima Sohra for Mawbeh Adventure Hub, and David Scott trail.

**18th July 2024**

The forestry team distributed 200 tree saplings to private landowner of Mawsadang Village, Hima Nongspung in the presence of CF of Hima Nongspung.

**3rd August 2024**

The forestry team along with the CF and the Asst. CF of Hima Mawbeh conducted site selection for tree plantation on private land at Synrangshohnoh and at Wahstew, Hima Mawbeh.

**6th August 2024**

The socio-economic team distributed 10 piglets for pig farming at Nongrum, Hima Mawphlang to 5 beneficiaries (2each).



7th – 8th August 2024

The Forestry Team transported 150 saplings to Mawsadang, Hima Nongspung and 300 saplings to Mawbeh, Hima Mawbeh for the tree plantation program.



13th August 2024

The Socio-economic team monitored the pig farming unit of the beneficiaries.



21st, 23rd & 30th August 2024

The Forestry Team monitored the tree plantation at Kukon, Hima Nonglwai, Jathang, Hima Sohra and Mawlasnai village.



27th – 29th August 2024

The tourism team conducted a three-day assessment for the tour guides of the “Mawphlang Tour Guide Committee” for the awareness & orientation programme to be held on the 4th of September 2024, which is part of the ‘Youth Counselling & Rehabilitation Programmes’ sponsored by the Government of Meghalaya under CMYDS 2021-22.



3rd September 2024

The socio-economic team distributed vermi-beds at Mawlum Tyrsad village, Hima Myllem to 16 beneficiaries of Hima Mawphlang, Hima Lyngiong, Hima Myllem and Hima Pamsanngut along with the CFs of Hima Pamsanngut and Hima Lyngiong.



4th September 2024

The tourism team organized an Awareness cum Orientation Program for the Tour Guides of the “Mawphlang Tour Guide Committee” as part of the ‘Youth Counselling and Rehabilitation Programmes’ sponsored by the Government of Meghalaya under CMYDS 2021-22. 21 tour guides from the Mawphlang Tour Guides were present in the program.



10th September 2024

The tourism team at the inauguration of Kiosk at Lum Kyrphei, Hima Myllem. A total number of 30 people attended the programme which includes the village Headman, Executive members, Tourism committee of Hima Myllem, community members, CF of Hima Myllem, Project Director, Tourism team, Forestry team, Office team and Accounts team.



11th and 13th September 2024

The forestry team monitored the rainfall station at Mawkyrdep village. The rain station is found intact and functioning. The team installed a new rain gauge at Urur village. The rain station after monitoring in the previous month was found to be in a damaged condition due to the high winds during the monsoon.



14th September 2024

The socio-economic team distributed 1312 poultry chicks to 32 beneficiaries from the 10 Hima.



27th September 2024

A one-day Free Medical Check-Up was conducted at Mawlum Tyrsad L.P School providing essential medical services to the community. The event was organized by Ka Synjuk Ki Hima Arliang Wah Umiam Mawphlang Welfare Society through the socio-economic team in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya Mawphlang CHC and H.G. Robert Hospital, Shillong.

The program catered to over 1200 participants, including students and residents. Services provided included General health, ENT, Paediatric, Dental, Ophthalmology, Gynaecology, and basic laboratory tests. In total villages and 26 Schools attended the free medical check-up.

