



KHASI HILLS COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT

4th QUARTER REPORT

OCT-DEC 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 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.

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. 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. 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 fourth quarter is characterized by the end of the monsoon and the beginning of the dry season. During this season communities are made aware of the potential hazards of the upcoming fire season and start preparing for maintaining and building of fire lines.

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. By the end of 2022, the targets for new Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) area was not reached, with only 11.26 ha added, the team is working to increase the area in the next 4 years to reach the 5 year goals.

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. 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

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. The CFs play an important role in monitoring and following up on alternative energy practices. In 2022, 470 LPG cookstoves and cylinders (including commercial) and rice cookers were distributed to families in the project area.

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.

Beneficiaries 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.



During this quarter, SHGs are assessed for their maintenance of bookkeeping and interviewed regarding any challenges or benefits they see from the program.



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 hosted its first festival, “Bam Niang Phlang”, which showcased a local delicacy, the grass caterpillar along with other local foods, fashion, and games. The team also is working on a number of events for the coming year and continues to work with local herbal practitioners to assist them with tools and preparations for herbal gardens.



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. During this quarter, the socio-economic team conducted a pruning training workshop for CFs and Youth Volunteers. Fifty-two participants attended the training program. The purpose of the training was to stimulate fresh growth of the temperate fruit trees. The session



was carried out by Mr. Nicolas Mynsong and Mr. Babul Sinar (Master Trainer, Dept of Horticulture Shillong).

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/kg.

Hydrology

The project is interested in learning more about how forest cover and conservation are affecting the water sources in the project area. During this fourth quarter the forestry team visited the water ponds in multiple Hima for micro-watershed management. The team monitored 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.



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. During this quarter, several of the completed projects were monitored including a public toilet, a drinking pond, and equipment for community buildings.

PROJECT UPDATES

3, 5 & 6 October 2022

The Forestry Team held a discussions about the Village Management Plans with the Headman and Executive members of Nongthymmai neng Village and Nonglwai village of Hima Lyngiong and Pamsanngut village of Hima Pamsanngut. They were assisted by the CFs.



5 October 2022

The forestry team monitored the ANR of Lumlaitsohpoh.



6 October 2022

The socio-economic team along with the KVK staff monitored buckwheat cultivation and took a soil test during the monitoring visit at Hima Mawphlang.

7 October 2022

The Forestry Team organised a training for the youth volunteers of Sohra on the making of scrubland plots.



17-21 October 2022

The entire project team was engaged with the verifying field audit conducted by SCS. This included site visits to various villages and carbon plots, meeting with beneficiaries, providing paperwork, and taking part in interviews.



28-29 October 2022

The project team all participated in the preparation of and hosting the Bam Ningphlang Festival held at Umsawmat village.



4-10 November 2022

The Socio-Economic Team (SET) and Forestry Team along with the beneficiaries participated in the documentary film to showcase the project along with Timothy Rice Whitley of COTAP, one of the carbon buyers.



10 November 2022

The Forestry Team distributed sign boards to the herbal healers and for biodiversity conservation in Mawrohroh, Hima Nongspung and Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong, respectively.



18 November 2022

The Forestry and Tourism Teams attended a meeting at Guwahati to represent the Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project as a stakeholder for discussions on **Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)**.



22 November 2022

The Forestry Team met with the village council members of the village Rangshangkham. The team visited as per the request received from the village for participation in a conservation programme. The team discussed the various steps to be taken before plantation and has decided that a community awareness programme will be held in the month of January 2023.



22 & 24 November 2022

The SET organised a one-day training on the Assessment of SHGs to the Community Facilitators and Youth Volunteers of different Hima in order to assess the group performance in maintaining book-keeping records and activities.



25 & 26 November 2022

The team installed camera traps at Dympep Community Protected Forest (5 cameras) and Laitkynsew Community Protected forest (4 cameras) respectively.



29 November 2022

The team monitored the proposed herbal garden site at Dympep village. The team will carry out mapping and inventory for the site in the coming month.



December 2022

Throughout the month of December the forestry team was involved in monitoring the carbon plots for carbon estimation. During this time, the CFs and Youth Volunteers also assist in maintaining the plots by painting/numbering the trees and painting the boundary corners. If any trees have reached the 10 cm DBH requirement since the previous monitoring, they are added to the forest inventory to be monitored.



6 December 2022

The SET distributed 14 piglets to 7 beneficiaries.

8 December 2022

The SET met with personnel of the Horticulture Dept. in Shillong to enquire about extending the polyhouse and shadenet program to beneficiaries and to address the reasons that beneficiaries have not yet received strawberry starts.



9 December 2022

The SET conducted assessments of SHGs and LWC at Hima Lyngiong, Thainthynroh village.



9 December 2022

The forestry team met with the village headman of Mawlang village at Smit to discuss the prospect of strawberry plantation as part of the livelihood programme.



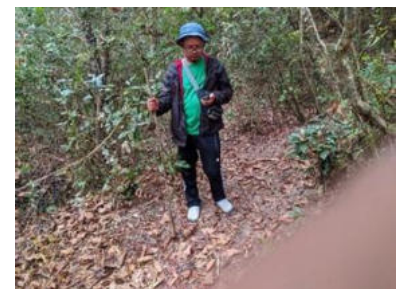
9 December 2022

The Forestry Team distributed weighing measure for monitoring of fuelwood consumption at Mawrohroh, Hima Nongspung and monitored the carbon plot at Waharkum, Hima Nonglwai and Khlawrani, Hima Pamsanngut along with the CFs and Local Youth Volunteers.



15 December 2022

The Forestry team mapped ANR at Wahthymmei (1.26 Ha) at Mawrohroh.



15 December 2022

The SET distributed 10 mushroom spawn each to 40 beneficiaries.



17 & 19 December 2022

The forestry team attended the LWC meeting of Mawlum Tyrsad cluster at Kyrphei village. The team gave the inputs about fireline and silviculture that need to be carried out during the dry season. During the LWC meeting at Mawjriong they discussed the selection of youth volunteers, fireline, and silviculture.



21 December 2022

The forestry team mapped the area in Kyrdemkhla along with the CF, Local Youth Volunteer, and village members of Hima Laitkroh.



28 December 2022

The team installed 4 camera traps at Lum Kyrphei.



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. During the month of October a ferret badger was found at Umlangmar Mylliem. The team contacted the wildlife department for necessary measures to be taken. But sadly the badger passed away the following morning. In Mawlangrain Umlangmar faeces were identified as the faeces of a civet cat. In November, an owl was found in Mawlum Tyrsad and in December two leopard cubs were handed over to the Wildlife Department for rehabilitation.

