



KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT
4th QUARTER REPORT
Oct-Dec 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. The Project has conducted several free medical check-ups throughout the year. On the 22nd October 2024, a total of 604 community members turned up to the free medical check-up. Basic screening including weight, height, and blood sugar measurements were done depending on the age. Among them 256 were school students who underwent blood group testing as part of the program. Doctors from 5 institutions, 4 staff nurse and 4 lab technicians were present for the medical check-up.



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 during the past few years 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. Camera traps were once again set during this quarter as the monsoon rains have ended. Community members and CFs continue to rescue injured wildlife during this time and take notes of their location. 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. 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 monsoons and the beginning of the dry season. Although the region is home to the wettest place on Earth, the winter months are extremely dry and drought is common, providing favorable conditions for fire to spread quickly. During the month of December, the team measured an area of 1Ha that has been affected by 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.

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 and project team members 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.

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). Also, the Project has distributed 60 Rice cookers to the beneficiaries in the project area.



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 family's 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.

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.

During this quarter, the Socio-economic team distributed 14 piglets to 7 beneficiaries and 16000 earthworms (*Eisenia fetida*) to 16 beneficiaries for vermicomposting.



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.

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 Socio-economic team distributed 1200 Mushroom spawn to 60 beneficiaries.



SHG Meet and Fest

During the month of December, the socio-economic team organized the 9th annual SHG (Self-help Group) Meet and Fest. There were 700 participants in attendance at the programme, including dignitaries, Synjuk members, SHGs, Community Facilitators and youth volunteers. The major attraction of the festival were the products that the SHGs had on display for sale. The festival also featured speeches, songs, traditional dance, and lively competitions for the SHGs to contend in. Currently within the project area there are 270 SHGs who are engaged in different activities like piggery, livestock, poultry farming, mushroom cultivation, vermi-compost production agricultural activities and other non-farming activities. Awards were distributed to the best performing SHGs and LWCs Individuals, testimonies.



Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

The Tourism Development Team has been actively conducting several programs. During this quarter, the team has organized the 3rd and the 4th Bam N'iangphlang Festival held on the 19th and the 26th October 2024 at Sohrarim, Hima Mawphlang and Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong respectively which focused on local foods and included traditional games, dance, and stalls for SHGs to sell their products. This year, the festival has grown significantly in size and scale, as it has gained widespread recognition and attracted the attention of a larger audience.



19th Oct 2024: Bam-N'iangphlang Festival at Sohrarim



26th Oct 2024: Bam-Niangphlang Festival at Umsawmat

Capacity Building

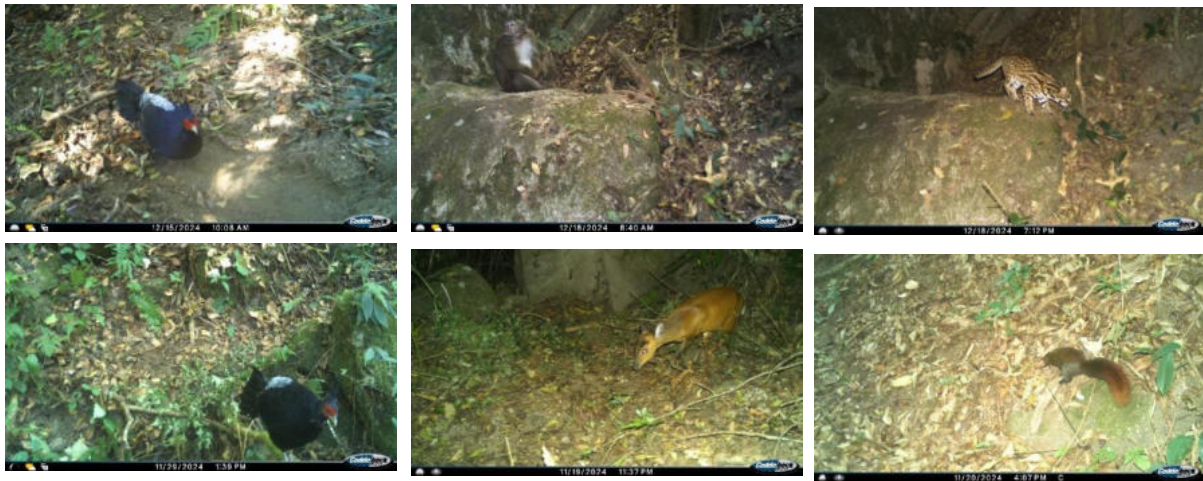
Ongoing training for CFs, Assistant CFs, and Youth Volunteers is provided by the project to create familiarity and acquaint new field staff with the activities related to forestry, socio-economic projects, and tourism. This year, the orientation program was held in November with all staff from the 10 Hima present. The CFs also provide training to the youth volunteers on how to conduct surveys within the communities. This quarter the surveys were conducted on LPG.

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 fourth 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. One Black Tail Crake bird and one Brown Fish Owl were rescued and handed over to the wildlife department for further rehabilitation.



Project updates for Quarter 4, October-December 2024

The forestry team monitored and distributed tree saplings to home-based Nurseries (HBN) throughout the project area to ensure saplings were being cared for properly. Additionally, the team monitored carbon plot and firelines. The team also conducted an inspection for the Community Development Funds 2024-2025 across the 10 Hima.



The socio-economic team (SET) conducted Self Help Group (SHG) evaluation and Lower Working Committee (LWC) assessment for the acknowledgement of the best performing SHGs and LWCs at the 9th SHG Meet and Fest held on the 12th December 2024.

The team also monitored the activities of many beneficiaries, including poultry, vermicomposting, polyhouse, revolving fund, mushroom, and pig farming.



1st, 9th, 14th, 16th, 24th, Oct 2024

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.



4th Oct 2024

The SET conducted SHG meeting at Niamsang and Mawsadang, Hima Nongspung with a purpose to understand the activities carried out by the SHGs as well as briefing the team's current activities and initiatives.



4th – 6th Oct 2024

The Tourism team along with the Project Director and community members of Laitkynsew village, Hima Laitkroh attended the Green Hub Festival organised by Green Hub * Royal Enfield at NEDFI, Tezpur, Assam. The festival highlighted the project as well as the films documented by the Green Hub fellows. The film documentary of Laitkynsew village namely, A Sacred Grove Binds Us Together and Wisdom of the Elders, were screened on the second and third day of the festival.



31st Oct 2024

The forestry team along with the Asst. CF and Youth Volunteer collected seeds of *Michelia* species to be distributed to the nurseries in the Project area for raising of seedlings.

**31st Oct and 13th Nov 2024**

The forestry team handed over a Black Tail Crake bird and Brown Fish Owl respectively to the Wildlife division of Forest Department for safety and rehabilitation.

**7th Nov 2024**

The forestry team mapped the silviculture area at Dympep along with the CFs of Hima Sohra. Total area was found to be 1.6 Ha.

**13th Nov 2024**

The forestry team remapped the ANR at Laitdiengsai along with the CF, Asst CF and Local Youth Volunteer of Hima Laitkroh. The area was found to be 5 Ha.

**13th Nov 2024**

The tourism team along with the CF of Hima Pamsanngut conducted a survey of the community hall of Tyrsad Umkseh as part of the ongoing initiative to develop wellness tourism. The purpose of the inspection was to assess its current condition, facilities, and potential for renovation.



15th Nov 2024

The forestry team under “Ka Synjuk” organized an orientation programme for CFs and YVs. A total of 138 members attended the programme. The Forestry team briefed on the roles and responsibilities of the CFs and YVs and recalled the various activities that are implemented throughout the year.

**14th Nov 2024**

The tourism team attended the Tourism Committee meeting at Mawbeh, Hima Mawbeh. The meeting focused on renting adventure gear and tents for tourists and other stakeholders, a venture that has the potential to generate significant income from the existing inventory of adventure equipment.

**22nd Nov 2024**

The forestry team, the SET along with the Community Facilitators and Youth Volunteers led the organizational visit of BADLAO Foundation from Jharkhand. Six members from the foundation visited the project and the team led them on field visit to various sites in the project area.

**22nd Nov 2024**

The tourism team in collaboration with the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Shillong conducted a cleaning drive at the David Scott Trail Head till Mawkor Sahep. This initiative aimed to promote environmental cleanliness and to foster a sense of social responsibility among students. A total of 23 students participated in the cleaning drive along with two dedicated faculty members of IHM.

**26th Nov 2024**

The tourism team along with the CF of Hima Nonglwai and Hima Lyngiong monitored the poly house of two beneficiaries Kong Albina Warjri at Hima Nonglwai and Kong Ortimon Kharryngi at Hima Lyngiong.

**28th Nov 2024**

The SET monitored the activities of beneficiaries who received Revolving Fund from “Synjuk” at Hima Lyngiong, Hima Myllem and Hima Nongspung.



29th Nov 2024

The forestry team along with the students and staff fenced the trees planted during the tree adoption programme. The trees planted at the school campus were fenced with agrinets.

**6th Dec 2024**

The tourism team along with the Projector Director and the accountant went to collect the Scorpio-N 4x4 vehicle under the Chief Minister's Elevate Scheme, Directorate of Tourism, Meghalaya. The delivery of this vehicle marks a significant step forward in promoting tourism in the region and enhancing the welfare of the local community.

**3rd Dec 2024**

The SET conducted a video documentation with the SHGs at Wahstew, Hima Mawbeh; Mawlum Tyrsad, Hima Myllem and Umlangmar, Hima Nongspung regarding the 9th SHG Meet and Fest.

**3rd Dec 2024**

The forestry team along with the SET, tourism team and the Project Director met with the community members of Mawmyrsiang and Tiewlieh village of Hima Laitkroh. The meeting was for awareness on the Project and its various activities. The program was held in the presence of the community leaders and CFs of the Hima. A total of 108 participants attended the program.

**5th Dec 2024**

The forestry team along with the CFs and YVs of Hima Sohra and Nongkhlaw mapped the sacred groves of Laitlyndop and Sohrarim village.

**6th Dec 2024**

The SET was able to complete the ABO Blood Group testing that was pending from the Free Medical Check-up conducted on the 27th September 2024 at Mawlum Tyrsad L.P School.



6th Dec 2024

The forestry team attended the LWC meeting of Mawlum Tyrsad cluster. The agenda of meeting was silviculture, forest fire, firelines and Community Development Fund (CDF) disbursement of installments for the various proposed activities.

**7th Dec 2024**

The forestry team went for ANR site selection at Lawbakut, Sohrarim, Hima Nongkhlaw along with the Sordar of Sohrarim.

**9th Dec 2024**

The forestry team along with the Asst. CF and Headman of Phanniewlahneng mapped the Firelines of 4.5 km at Phanniewlahneng Village.

**9th Dec 2024**

The SET conducted a photo documentation with the well performing LWCs at Mawbeh cluster, Hima Mawbeh and Individual beneficiary at Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh for the 9th SHG Meet and Fest.

**10th Dec 2024**

The Martin Luther Christian University carried out an Organizational visit of the BSW 5th Semester students to Ka Synjuk. The session was conducted by the SET. A total number of 32 students along with 2 faculties attended the session.

**21st Dec 2024**

The forestry team along with the Executive members of Phanniewlahneng Village and the Asst. CF mapped the ANR area at Lumweijngem, Hima Lyngiong. The area was found to be 16.2Ha.



The 2024 Annual Report will produce all the monitoring information required and provide details and updates in relation to the project implementation.