



KHASI HILLS COMMUNITY PROJECT

1st QUARTER REPORT

JAN-MAR 2021

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 84 participating communities guided by their village councils (Durbar).

<https://synjukmawphlangociety.com>



PROJECT SUMMARY

The Khasi Hills Community Project is nearing 10 years of successful operation. The project has mobilized approximately 7,000 families to protect and restore 9,250 hectares of old-growth, montane cloud forests in the Umiam River Watershed. In addition, project communities are working to regenerate over 5,000 hectares of degraded 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 goal is to increase household income in the 84 participating villages, where 90 percent of the families are below India's poverty line, while also improving public health through the provision of clean drinking water systems and smokeless cooking technologies to reduce household air pollution.

Response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has decreased in Meghalaya and movement throughout the state is less restricted. During the first three months of 2021, the Covid cases had dropped significantly down to just two new daily cases. Community facilitators and youth volunteers have continued with forest patrols, monitoring, and fire monitoring. The team has been able to travel once again to the field and perform new awareness programmes with Covid safety measures in place. *However, at the time of writing, the cases throughout India have increased exponentially causing new lockdowns within Meghalaya and throughout the country.

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. A portion of the trail is on project land and the community constructed rest-stops and provides maps and guides. It continues to be an important eco-tourism community project. Forest conservation 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 and fish, some of which are found only in this area.

An important project strategy to reduce deforestation and forest degradation is community-based forest fire control. The project has continued to train local Community Facilitators in monitoring the production, transport, and use of charcoal within the project area. This first quarter is characterized by the dry season, during which fires are prominent. Several of the fires were caused by charcoal production which spread into the project area and by burning weeds for agricultural production. The team and Community Facilitators measured an area of 27.16 Ha that had been affected from 10 different fires from January to March 2021. During these months, youth volunteers and community members in the project area were active in making over 10 km in length of fire line in order to protect forests from fire. Continuing education programmes are being implemented to educate local charcoal makers on fire safety as well.

Degraded Forest Restoration

With over 5,700 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. The villages receive support from the project to clear fire lines, remove weeds and scrub, and open space for emerging saplings. Gaps are filled with seedlings and saplings. Nearly 2,000 hectares of land have been restored in this way over the past eight years. Villages are finding that restoring the watershed is resulting in better stream flow levels, as well as water availability in the dry season.

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, and electric rice cookers. Adoption of gas cooktops has reduced firewood consumption an average of 2.75 kgs of fuelwood per day for each household. Fuelwood continues to be monitored by youth volunteers in the communities.

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. This will also provide information on which families are already implementing LPG and which would like to do so in the future. During the 1st quarter of 2021 the project allocated 592 new LPG connections to beneficiaries.



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, green house vegetable growing, and organic farming. After the project distributed green houses, village families have been able to start cultivating cauliflower, broccoli, mint, coriander, eggplant, mustard leaf, chillies, tomatoes, and beans to generate income. SHGs are also involved with vermicomposting to increase value-added products to their marketable goods and for use in their own agricultural practices. During this quarter, poultry was vaccinated, and beneficiaries were monitored for their upkeep of the animals. Beneficiaries were able to sell their poultry for Rs. 250-300/kg and piglets for Rs. 10,000-11,500 each.



Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

During the 1st quarter, eco-tourism sites were open in the area. This is a much-needed benefit to many in the project area who had depended on tourism for part of their livelihood. Guides are eager to share the cultural beauty with others and have been provided with the necessary protective gear and trained in how to proceed in a sector that is still susceptible to Covid implications.

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 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 and jellies. The fruit trees are found to have a high survival rate when protected from grazing animals.



Additionally, project sponsored polyhouses have provided shelter from the heavy rains to produce ornamental flowers and bedding plants which have a good market in Meghalaya.

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. Spore procurement was possible during the first quarter, but it continues to be unreliable. Therefore, the project team has started the process of making its own spore production facility. This will help to ensure spore distribution to beneficiaries during time of shortage.



Community Development Grants

Each year the project provides the participating communities with community development grants to fund 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. Most communities use the funds for sanitation, eco-tourism, and school upkeep.

PROJECT UPDATES

2 January 2021

The Forestry Team along with the CF, Asst. CF of Hima Lyngiong, and Local Youth Volunteers of Hima Lyngiong monitored the firelines at Lumdidum, Lyngdoh Phanblang, Hima Lyngiong with a total length of 2.8 km.



6 January 2021

The Forestry Team went to Madan Mawlein, Kyiem Mawphlang along with the CF, Asst. CF, Local Youth Volunteer, and local villagers of Hima Mawphlang to put out the forest fire in the area. The fire only burnt 0.3 Ha. The cause was burning cultivated land to clear weeds.



7 January 2021

The Forestry Team monitored the forest fire affected area of Laitkroh Hima. The villagers of Mawmyrsiang made an effort to put out the fire. On the same day the Forestry Team along with the Asst. CF and Local Youth Volunteer of Hima Mawphlang measured the area engulfed by fire at Lumlaitsohphoh Wahyngkien-Ramklang, Hima Mawphlang on 5th January 2021. A total of 5.8 Ha was affected.



12 January 2021

The Socio-Economic Team (SET) along with the veterinary team gave the fowl pox vaccination to a total of 168 chicks in Hima Pamsanngut, Hima Lyngiong, and Hima Mawphlang.



12 January 2021

Local villagers of Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh actively participated in silviculture of 20 Ha at Lum U Mong along with the Forestry Team and CF of Hima Laitkroh.



21 January 2021

The Socio-economic Team monitored livestock, shade net, and loan beneficiaries from Hima Laitkroh. Mrs. Phomkiny had purchased the materials for Pharmacy.



21 January 2021

The Forestry Team along with the Project Director, CF and Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang met with the village members of Ur Ur village for extension of the Project. The PD gave a brief description about the activities of the Project and appealed to the villagers to join with the Project for nature conservation.



22 January 2021

The Socio-economic Team along with the veterinary team went and gave R2B vaccination to a total of 168 chicks in Hima Pamsanngut, Hima Lyngiong, and Hima Mawphlang.



22 January 2021

Fireline was created at Dympep village with the village men and boys participating in the programme.



28 January 2021

The SET distributed temperate fruit trees to the beneficiaries from 10 Hima (Hima Mawphlang, Hima Nonglwai, Hima Lyngiong, Hima Pamsanngut, Hima Nongspung, Hima Myllem, Hima Laitkroh, Hima Mawbeh, Hima Sohra, and Hima Nongkhlaw). 1420 chestnuts, 50 *Myrica* (Soh Phie), and 200 cherry were distributed to 57 beneficiaries.



28 January 2021

The SET distributed mushroom spawn to the beneficiaries from Hima Mawphlang, Hima Nonglwai, Hima Nongspung, Hima Mawbeh and Hima Sohra. A total of 180 mushroom spawn were distributed to beneficiaries.



30 January 2021

The Forestry Team along with the CF of Hima Pamsangut monitored the firelines at Remjumai, Tyrsad Umkseh, Hima Pamsangut. The fireline covered a total length of 1.8 km.



3 February 2021

A total of 25 participants, from 10 Hima, were present for the training on apiculture given by Mr. Dming Rani. The training aimed to describe the methodologies of rearing bees for better output from the hives, as well as, help better understand the phenological events in the surroundings. This impacts the yield of honey and the multiplication of bees into new hives. With more beehives the livelihood of these families can be uplifted. The training was provided to the beneficiaries to support a livelihood activity to families who are dependent on forest resources for a living.



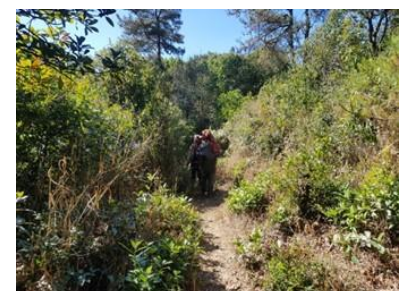
5 February 2021

The Project Director along with the Socio-economic Team and Forestry Team organised an awareness programme on the activities carried out by the project at Wahumlawbah Village. Around 51 participants attended the programme. A welcome speech was given by the headman of the village whereby he expressed his gratitude towards the Project Director, Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh, along with the staff members. His welcome was followed by a speech from the Project Director on the purpose of the project: to preserve and conserve the forest.



5 February 2021

Mapping at the extension area for the VNV plantation programme took place at the community forest of Mawsadang village.



6 February 2021

The Forestry Team monitored 2.5 km of firelines at Lawkur Nongbet, Nongwah, Hima Pamsanngut along with the CF and Local Youth Volunteers of Hima Pamsanngut.



6 February 2021

A total of 45 village members of Mawrohroh actively participated in silvicultural activity of 3 Ha at Umjangut in the presence of the Forestry Team and CF of Hima Nongspung.



9 February 2021

A one-day training programme on 'Pig Husbandry' was organised by ICAR, Meghalaya at Mawphlang. A total of 121 beneficiaries attended the training programme. Dr. Kadirvel explained in detail the new technology of pig rearing for the improvement of livelihood of farmers and the scientific feeding of pigs using low cost locally available feed resources to reduce the feed cost and increase farmers' income. Other topics included common diseases of pigs, vaccination protocol, and supplementation of vitamins and minerals.



9 February 2021

The Forestry Team mapped Ur Ur Village along with the Headman of Ur Ur, Asst CF and youth Volunteer of Hima Mawphlang.



9 February 2021

The new ANR at Mawlum Tyrsad village of Hima Myllem was mapped. The consensus of the Headman and the villagers were taken for the ANR declaration.

10 February 2021

The Socio-economic Team aided Mr. Nangtei Pyngrope of Lad Umrisain Mawphlang village with masonry tools. Mr. Nangtei Pyngrope is a miniature artist who has approached the Project for help. The team provided Mr. Nangtei Pyngrope with tools for his expertise.

10 February 2021

The team visited the eco-tourism site at Mawstep village which is a trekking detour from Mawstep to Jathang and ends at Ladmawphlang village along the David Scott Trail.



12 February 2021

In Mawsadang temporary plots were made to have a better understanding of the species composition and density of forest habitat. Four temporary plots were made of size 10 x 10 m.



13 February 2021

An inauguration programme took place at Mawstep village with the DC of East Khasi Hills to instate the new trekking site which is a by-pass route from the David Scott Trail to Mawstep and Jathang.



15 &16 February 2021

Community members from Manipur came to Mawphlang for a two-day training that was conducted by the Forestry Team. The training focused on collection of baseline data for carbon along with GPS use. The Socio-economic team also attended the programme.



17 February 2021

The Forestry Team measured the forest fire area of 0.97 Ha at Ummarkhain, Nongwah, Hima Pamsanngut along with the CF and local youth volunteer of Hima Pamsanngut.



17 February 2021

The Home-based Nursery at Hima Laitkroh was monitored. Seeds of *Myrica esculenta* were tested with hot treatment for germination rate.



23 February 2021

The Forestry Team measured the area of fire to be 0.4 Ha at Lumkyntiewdngiem, Sohrarim, Hima Nongkhlaw along with the Asst. CF of Hima Sohra and local youth volunteer of Hima Nongkhlaw.



25 February 2021

An awareness programme was organised for 6 villages and took place at Mawsadang village. The programme started with an introduction speech by the chairperson, Mr. Aiborson Umdor, Community Facilitator of Hima Lyngiong. On this day Project Director, Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh, highlighted the aims and objectives of the Project.



2 March 2021

The Community Facilitators and Asst. Community Facilitators were trained on photography and the use of WPS app for data entry. The Forestry Team and Socio-economic Team provided hands on training for using the app to entry data as word and excel files.



4 March 2021

The Project Director, Mr. T. Lyngdoh along with the Forestry Team and Socio-economic Team had a meeting at the Community Knowledge and Resource Centre in Nongrum with the key person of seven villages belonging to Hima Nogspung: Mawsadang, Lawkhla Mawlong, Lawkhla, Niamsang, Remdong, Pyndengumbri and Laitniangtlong. The interaction was based on the profile of the village, such as resources available in the village, community forest, and health facilities.



5 & 6 March 2021

The team visited sites of bun cultivation. The sites were geotagged and photographed for reference during remote sensing studies by the expert.



5 March 2021

The Forestry Team monitored the implementation of fireline at Lumlaitsohphoh, Wahlyngkien Ramklang, Hima Mawphlang along with the Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang. The Local Youth Volunteers who participated covered a length of 2 km.



10 March 2021

The Forestry Team along with the CF, Asst. CF and Local Youth Volunteers laid out the temporary plots to measure species diversity (10x10m) at Ur Ur Community Forest, Hima Mawphlang.



12 March 2021

The Forestry Team along with the CF, Asst. CF and Local Youth Volunteer laid temporary plots to measure species diversity (10x10m) at Wahumlawbah, Hima Mawphlang.



12 March 2021

The Forestry Team met with the CF and Headman of Mawsadang village to talk about conducting an awareness programme and to discuss the collection of polygons for the ANR site.



13 March 2021

The Forestry Team measured the forest fire area at Lumniewkor, Phanniewlahrum, Hima Lyngiong. A total of 0.67 Ha of affected area was measured. The fire was caused by clearing and burning weeds for cultivation.



16 March 2021

The area affected by forest fire was measured at Lummawbyrna, Steplakrai, Hima Mawbeh. A total of 2.1 Ha was burned, and the cause is suspected to have originated at the David Scot Trail.



17 March 2021

The Forestry Team monitored the Home-Based Nursery at Sohra side. One HBN in Sohra Mawkma village was under performing and necessary actions were need and instructed to be carried out. The HBN at Mawbeh Laitthemlangсах village had about 4390 saplings ready for plantation and more saplings will be ready by monsoon. The HBNs in Laitkroh are well maintained and about 2000 saplings are ready for plantation. The remaining units might not be ready for plantation this season.



18 March 2021

The Project Director, Mr. T. Lyngdoh, along with the Forestry Team and Socio-economic Team organized an awareness programme on the Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project at Lawkhla village and Mawsadang village. There were 31 participants who took part in the programme from Lawkhla extension village and 110 participants from three villages of the Mawsadang cluster.



19 March 2021

The Project Director along with the Forestry Team and Socio-economic Team organized an Awareness Programme at Kyrdemkhla village and Mawjriong village. Later the teams conducted Participatory Rural Appraisal along with the community people. The awareness programmes at Kyrdemkhla and Mawjriong villages were successful, with 42 and 53



participants respectively. Residents were made aware about the project and the importance of conservation of forest and habitat without compromising the ability to sustain their livelihood.

23 March 2021

Mapping took place at Wahrahaw village, Hima Mawphlang in the presence of the Headman and Executive members of Wahrahaw, along with the CF and Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang.



24 March 2021

The Socio-economic Team along with the Forestry Team conducted Participatory Rural Appraisal at Mawbri village. There were 34 participants during the PRA using the techniques of social mapping, resource mapping and Venn-diagram to gather information of the villages.



24 March 2021

The Forestry Team mapped the ANR area for Mawbri village. The village Headman and CFs were present on the day.



24 March 2021

The Forestry Team along with the CF, Asst. CF and Local Youth Volunteers laid temporary plots for monitoring species diversity at Wahrahaw, Hima Mawphlang.



25 March 2021

Silvicultural activity monitoring of 2.5 Ha at Law Adong Laitthemlangzah, Hima Mawbeh by local villagers and Local Youth Volunteers in the presence of the CF and Asst. CF of Hima Mawbeh.



30 March 2021

The area affected by forest fire at LumPamsynrih, Wahrahaw, Hima Mawphlang was measured along with the Asst. CF of Hima Mawphlang and Secretary of Wahrahaw village. An area of about 1.68 Ha was measured with the cause remaining unknown.



Biodiversity Monitoring

During the 2021 1st quarter, a jungle owlet was rescued in Ladumrisain. The bird was later handed over to the Wildlife Department. Monkeys were also sighted in the Community Forest of Perkseh.

