



KHASI HILLS
COMMUNITY REDD+ PROJECT
1ST QUARTER REPORT
JAN-MARCH 2025

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 8000 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 61.17 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 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 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. Community members and CFs continue to rescue injured wildlife during this time and take notes of their location.



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 first quarter is characterized by the continued dry and windy weather. 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. 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.

Several occurrences of forest fires were caused by charcoal production and bun cultivation since the buffer between the forest and area of production is not large enough. Fire is known to spread into the project area when unwanted plant material is burned for agricultural production. The team



and Community Facilitators measured an area of 63.74Ha. (22.93ha. of which was grassland and 0.02ha. agricultural land) that had been affected by fire from January to March 2025. During these months, youth volunteers and community members in the project area were active in making and maintaining 43.59km in length of fire line. Awareness programmes continue to be implemented to raise awareness on fire safety throughout the communities and reduce the spread of forest fire. The Socio-economic team is also actively working to include charcoal makers in alternative income generating activities to transition away from charcoal production.



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 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.*, *Engelherdtia spicata*, and *Alnus nepalensis*.



Seed collection



Home Based Nursery

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. During the year 2024-2025 survey, the team found that adoption of gas cooktops has reduced firewood consumption an average 1kg 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. Surveys conducted by the CFs indicate that this initiative has reduced fuelwood consumption 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 wood 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/Shadenets 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 and pig farming. During the first quarter, several beneficiaries have taken up a new livelihood initiative involving the use of egg-incubators.



Polyhouse



Egg-incubator



Vermicomposting



Pig farming

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, apple, and kiwi vines 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.



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 910 Mushroom spawn to 40 beneficiaries.



Eco-Tourism and Cultural Conservation

The Tourism Development Team has been actively conducting several programs. During this quarter, the Tourism team organized a one-day trek to Lum Dorbar Ki Ksuid, Umsawmat, Hima Lyngiong which attracted a group of 60 enthusiastic tourists. The Tourism team also conducted site inspection, site survey and mapping of newly established tourists' destination within the project area.

On the 26th of March 2025 the tourism team successfully organized a cleaning drive at the David Scott Trail from Wahtham to Korparkti. The objective of the cleaning drive was to focus on the stretch from Wahtham to Korparkti to promote environmental conservation and community involvement.

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 provided training to the youth volunteers on how to conduct surveys within the communities.

During the first quarter, the Socio-economic team conducted three training programs:

- The Socio-economic team in collaboration with the A.H & Veterinary Department, Shillong organized a training program on egg-incubation. A total of 19 beneficiaries attended the training. Each beneficiary received an incubator following the training.



- The Socio-economic team conducted trainings on how to collect household surveys and perform Village Knowledge Register (VKR) activities to the CFs and YVs of the project area.



- The Socio-economic team organized a training on power tillers to provide hand on skills and knowledge to participants on how to operate and maintain the power tiller effectively. The resource person on this training was from Tradeline company, Guwahati. The training was successfully completed with 11 participants.



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 the last quarter, the forestry team collected drinking water samples from 10 micro-watersheds across the 10 Hima for for qualitative and quantitative analysis at the Laboratory of the State Food Testing, Government of Meghalaya; the result shows the presence of coliforms and other micro-biological contamination in the waters sampled from community collection sites. The reason may vary from grazing animals in and around the site, decay of organic litter, and other residues eroding into the water source. The pH levels in most sites are slightly acidic to acidic range. The quantitative analysis shows that the spring water level is low in the dry season. The Project is addressing this by protection and increased vegetative cover around the area. The team has acted in communities to provide awareness on safe drinking water habits and to describe the importance of silviculture and assisted natural regeneration in the micro-watersheds.

The CFs are also continuing to document the sources of the drinking water throughout the project area for better monitoring.

Biodiversity Monitoring

Throughout the first 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 1, January-March 2025

Throughout the first quarter the socio-economic team (SET) monitored the activities of many beneficiaries, including, temperate fruit trees, pig breeding, poultry rearing, pig farming, mushroom cultivation, polyhouse/shadenets and vermi-composting.



January-March 2025

The forestry team installed several camera traps and conducted regular monitoring over the course of the quarter.

January-February 2025

The SET conducted trainings on household survey and Village Knowledge Register (VKR) to the Community Facilitators (CFs) and Youth Volunteers (YVs) across the project area.



January-February 2025

The forestry team monitored Home Based Nurseries (HBN) throughout the Project area.



January 2025

Throughout the month of January, the tourism team monitored the ambulances (part of the previous years' benefit sharing to participating communities) of Hima Mawphlang, Hima Pamsangut, Hima Lyngiong, Hima Sohra, Hima Mawbeh and Hima Laitkroh.



7th January 2025

The forestry team met with the clan members of Lawsiej village, South West Khasi Hills. The programme was an awareness meeting to brief on the Project's activities and the objectives of the Project. 14 people attended the meeting.



9th January 2025

The tourism team effectively coordinated a media shoot for Brut India, showcasing Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh at Mawphlang Sacred Grove. This initiative aims to spotlight Lyngdoh's outstanding contributions to the community and his exceptional leadership.



9th January 2025

The forestry team attended the LWC meeting of Mawsadang cluster at Mawsadang village. The agenda discussed were various Forestry aspects like silviculture, forest fire, and ANR. The other agenda items included the management and coordination protocol for utilization of the power tiller. A total of 20 members attended the meeting.



10th, 16th, and 17th January 2025

The forestry team along with the CFs and Youth volunteers monitored the carbon plot of Lad-Mawphlang, Hima Sohra, Mawsadang, Hima Nongspung and Laitniangtlong, Hima Nongspung.



14th January 2025

The SET monitored the implementation of four power tillers at Hima Nongspung, Myllem, and Nonglwai.

Additionally, the SET along with 19 beneficiaries attended training on egg incubation at the A.H & Veterinary Department, Shillong. Each beneficiary received an egg incubator and 48 eggs.



21st January 2025

The forestry team collected the fruits of *Ilex khasiana* from Laitniangtlong village, Hima Nongspung. The fruits were then distributed to the HBN at Myllem Mawlum Tyrsad and the central nursery at Nongrum Mawphlang.



22th January 2025

The SET monitored the egg incubators distributed to the beneficiaries of the Project areas on 14th January 2025.



24th January 2025

The SET accompanied experts from Tradeline during the servicing of the power tillers in Hima Myllem, Hima Nonglwai, and Hima Nongspung.



24th January 2025

The forestry team along with the Project Director met with Motion NGO from Guwahati, Assam for consultation as the Motion NGO are planning to run carbon credits projects in the regions of Northeast India.



29th January 2025

The SET along with the Project Director attended the award ceremony for the top-performing students of Laitniangtlong SSA UP School, Laitniangtlong.



31st January 2025

The SET attended the LWC meeting at Lawshlem Kyndonglaimawbah cluster, Hima Lyngiong. There were 26 attendees.



February 2025

The SET completed photo documentation of temperate fruit trees across the project area.



7th & 20th February 2025

The tourism team, Project Director, CFs, and YVs inspected tourist sites in Mawbeh and Pyrda village to evaluate their potential and historical significance. Pyrda village men discussed infrastructure needs for sustainable tourism. And on the 20th, they assessed the Mawnguid-briew trail's tourism potential for adventure activities like rock climbing and camping.



11th February 2025

The SET organized a training on power tiller to provide hand on skills and knowledge to participants on how to operate and maintain the power tiller effectively. The training was successfully completed with 11 participants.



14th February 2025

The tourism team along with the CFs of Hima Mawbeh completed GPS mapping of Mawbeh’s tourist spots to install signages, identifying camping areas, trekking routes, and other potential attractions.



18th February 2025

The tourism team, along with the Sirdar, CFs, and a YV of Hima Sohra, surveyed potential Eco-Tourism sites in Laitlyndop. They visited Kshaid Tiew Saw (3km from the village), Mawruti (another 3km), and Kshaid Urwan, trekking a total of 6km in about four hours.



25th February 2025

The Project team was invited to Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Mawphlang as experts for deliberation on various topics like climate change, waste management, renewable energy, and other topics for the “Green School Activity.” A Total of 240 students were present during the programme.



6th – 7th March 2025

The forestry team along with Kiran Baldwin and associates from The Global Biodiversity Standard (TGBS) team visited the pilot site of Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh with the CFs and the youth volunteers of Hima Laitkroh and visited the reference site in Mawphlang, Hima Mawphlang along with the Asst. CF and youth volunteer of Hima Mawphlang.



11th March 2025

The forestry team along with the Project Director, the Socio-economic team, Tourism team and the Office team attended the Awareness Program organized by Ka Synjuk in Langsymphut village, Pongkung for possible extension of the Project. The total number of attendees is 43.



12th March 2025

The SET in collaboration with “Money Wise Organization” organized an awareness program at Mawlum Tyrsad, Hima Myllem targeting local villagers. The initiative aimed to enhance financial literacy through budgeting, saving, responsible borrowing and digital finance. The total number of attendees was 35.



13th March 2025

The SET along with the forestry team attended the LWC meeting of the Thainthynroh-Laimawhing cluster held at Laitmawhing village. The meeting was attended by 48 participants. During the meeting, the team discussed the various Socio-Economic activities like adoption and strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), promotion of mushroom cultivation, livestock rearing initiatives, fruit tree plantation, vermicomposting, and apiculture, as well as forestry activities.



19th March 2025

The SET distributed 910 packets of Mushroom spawns to the 40 beneficiaries across the 10 Hima who have been successful in the preceding cultivation and they have the desire to keep cultivating mushrooms via the assistance of the Project.



20th March 2025

The tourism team along with the Project Director inaugurated the Kiosk at Laitkynsew, Hima Laitkroh marking a significant effort to promote tourism and develop the region. The inauguration ceremony was attended by 32 people.



26th March 2025

The tourism team successfully organized a cleaning drive at the David Scott Trail from Wahtham to Korparkti. The number of participants was 157 which included the tourism team, two tourists, CFs, YVs and tour guides of Hima Mawbeh and Hima Mawphlang, LWC members of Mawbeh cluster, community members of Steplakrai, Laitsohma, Mawkalang and Laitsohma village and the NSS unit of Martin Luther Christian University.



28th March 2025

The tourism team and the Project Director inaugurated the wellness centre at Tyrsad Umkseh, Hima Pamsangut to promote a holistic wellbeing and healthcare in the community. The number of participants was 34 members which included 10 herbal healers.

