

## **Advocacy of mountain women: a student engaged learning approach**

Across mountain communities, women are frequently among the world's poorest and must be at the center of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Being engaged in traditional roles as mothers, women are disproportionately affected by the challenges of mountain life.

About 39 percent of the mountain population in developing countries, or 329 million people, is estimated to be vulnerable to food insecurity, according to a recent study of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with the Mountain Partnership Secretariat. The study revealed a 30 percent increase in the number of mountain people, including women and children, vulnerable to food insecurity from 2000 to 2012, while the mountain population increased by only 16 percent.

As one of the ways to raise awareness about the need for sustainable development for mountain women, Utah Valley University (UVU) actively contributed to sustainable mountain development (SMD) agenda of the United Nations since 2006 when UVU joined the Mountain Partnership of the United Nations and it was its focal point. Since 2007 we combined the SMD advocacy with a student engaged learning approach.

The developed extracurricular UVU model founded on student clubs to provide student opportunities to advocate in SMD initiatives, which could last longer than one semester.

Clubs allow to implement major principles of the community engaged learning: a) to provide problems for students to learn, b) to learn them as a group, c) to have teachers as facilitators for student learning, and d) to make students responsible for own learning.

The model achieves that through the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU. Since it was created in the fall 2011, UIMF members encourage contribution from institutions in the state of Utah and in North America to the SMD advocacy globally. We as a faculty since then provided students our support as mentors.

The model allowed students, non-traditional ones in particular, to gain professional skills and experiences through the advocacy of the mountain and rural women causes in the State of Utah, North America and at the United Nations.

Students were able to contribute to the promotion of the SMD agenda in a variety ways: in addition to hosting regularly international Women of the Mountain Conferences, they advocated for the adoption of the mountain targets during the United Nations Open Working Groups on Sustainable Development Goals during 2013-2015 as well as for inclusion the mountain issues in the agenda of the Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015.

This presentation is another example of the student advocacy of the mountain women at the major gender forum of the United Nations through developed student engaged model.