

Saudi Arabian Student Contribution to the CSW65



My participation at the 65th Session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) in March 2021 was the second time when through a student engaged learning approach (SEL) I raised my voice jointly with my peers in support of mountain families and women.

The SEL model developed at UVU, allows students like myself to thoroughly develop more professional experiences and skills by working with my peers as a team. Our teachers are usually not involved themselves directly, but help us by mentoring. We had many obstacles, but we managed to solve them as we went through to resolve practical tasks. This type of learning model is very effective and I also gained a lot of knowledge and insights.

In March 2019, I joined 10 members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) led by Michael Hinatsu, VP of UIMF to the United Nation headquarters in New York City to [*advocate for mountain women and girls at the CSW63. I contributed to hosting a parallel event advocating for mountain women during CSW63.*](#) Unfortunately, that year we could not include mountain women and girls to the final document.



(L to R): Michael Hinatsu, UIMF Vice President, Hazim Alshanbari, Abdulrahman Alghanmi, William Gum and Ms. Julie Kofoed, UN Global Compact at the 68UNCSC

When we came back to the State of Utah, we met with Congressman Ben McAdam (D-UT) and [reported to him about our efforts](#) to empower mountain women and girls at CSW63. As a result, Congressman McAdam spoke about UIMF at CSW63 at the US Congress which was [published in the official Congressional Record](#) on 12 April 2019. As a follow up to the visit, we also hosted at UVU on 8-11 April, 2019. [Mr. Richard Jordan, who assisted us during CSW63.](#) Mr. Jordan spent 40 years as a civil society activist at the UN. Through UIMF, I was involved in hosting [the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev,](#) who spoke about the Kyrgyz government policies towards the mountain communities and women and girls in particular. The Kyrgyz guest [contributed to our efforts to host the 68th UN Civil Society Conference \(68UNCSC\) in Salt Lake](#)

City and advocate for mountain targets. What was also important for the advocacy of the mountain targets, UIMF members and myself among them regularly observed annually the United Nations International Mountain Day at UVU on 11 December. UIMF is the only student group in North America which celebrates IMD every year since 2010. It was also highlighted by the UN Secretary General in July, 2016 for hosting the Fourth International Women of the Mountain Conference in 2015 .

On Monday March 22, 2021, we hosted our virtual panel at the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) under the title, “*Mountain Women Empowerment Through The Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model.*” We started preparing for this event during the fall semester 2020, as there was much to be done. We also selected specific assignments, took responsibility and accomplished the necessary preparations one by one as a team. Each student was assigned to some tasks and we were led by Mr. Dallas Karren, UIMF Vice-President. Additionally, we also were able to raise funds of \$1000 in total by selling Californian oranges in conjunction with UVU Rotaract as a service project that benefited the ‘Coats For Kids’ and ‘Kids on the Move’ charity programs and helped to cover some of our expenses for CSW65. Therefore, our preparations have paid off and we successfully were able to host the event and sent our message to the CSW65 participants and the entire world to stop ignoring mountain women and girls, who are among the poorest and most neglected globally.



Dallas Karren leads the delegation in the event

At the event, there were twelve speakers and I was one of them. I opened my statement by introducing myself and UIMF. Also, I shared with the audience some of our activities that we hosted at UVU campus. This was an opportunity for me to advocate for the marginalized populations in the world. I shared my personal experience and how hard it is to live in a mountain community where people are frequently ignored and neglected by the government and even the international community. I also demand that the CSW include mountain women and girls in their Final Outcome Document.



Abdulahman Alghanmi speaking at the event

Overall, I was very happy to represent UIMF and mountain women and girls at the highest gender forum of the UN. This is a huge experience for me as a student, and I look forward to getting involved with more activities that address real-world issues.

Abdulahman Alghanmi, UIMF member