

Statement
**Parallel event “Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive
Student-Engaged Learning Model”**
65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
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I was born in a mountain community in Saudi Arabia. While I am proud to be a mountain woman, at the same time, it was hard for me to grow up as a girl due to gender inequality. I came to the United States as an international student in March 2014. Today, I am in my senior year at Utah Valley University majoring in Criminal Justice. Through my journey at UVU, I was looking for ways that I could bring justice for women, especially in terms of gender equality both in my country and elsewhere.

I have been able to do so by being engaged with the activities of the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU. The UIMF advocates for the mountain women, girls, and families, who are among the poorest and most neglected on national and international levels. We at UIMF do so through a Student Engaged Learning (SEL) approach when we work as a group while addressing real-world issues and at the same time gaining professional skills and experiences. Our teachers in this case help us to achieve those goals by being our mentors. As I went through, my peers and I jointly were able to learn how to advocate in particular for mountain women and girls.

Being a member with UIMF has exposed me to a variety of activities and cases related to mountain communities and I learned by comparing whether they treated their women and girls the same way that I was treated.

I contributed to several activities of the UIMF and in particular the 10th and [11th International Mountain Day \(IMD\)](#), which were held at UVU under the umbrella of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. I was responsible during those events by preparing the event for broadcasting through zoom. I have also introduced Anna Mahalak, Youth Engagement Manager for UNA-USA and read her bio during last year's IMD observation. Therefore, those events helped me to gain more skills and be exposed to other organizations.

As a Rotaractor, I was glad to contribute to the commemoration of the [World Polio Day](#) at UVU in October of 2019. While we learned that polio still exists among mountain communities and families in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the event encouraged me to learn also whether polio had any impact in my country Saudi Arabia. As the most recent activity, I contributed to the [fundraising campaign of Rotaractors](#) by selling oranges. We, Rotaractors, raised more than \$1,000, which would be used to buy coats for children from needy families in Utah County and also for our participation at this session of the commission on the Status of Women.

As part of my academic development, I am studying now mountain communities in Iran. As part of my research, which will be published by the end of the semester, I compare the Iranian women and girls' healthcare, especially those who live in mountain communities, to the way that I used to have in Saudi Arabia. A recent study that was published by BMC women's Health, which took place in Alborz province, Iran, concluded that there are high risk behaviors that are highly prevalent among Iranian women. This healthcare problem is present in almost every mountain community.

In conclusion, as a mountain woman myself, I would like to raise my voice in support of many women and girls who live in mountain areas all around the world. They need help and support from all of us and by not only being included in the UN documents, but also having involved in the process of decision making at important political forums, like CSW.