

Speaking Russian in the Mountains

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During the last 10 years the United Nations has made leaps and bounds in its efforts to help end discrimination against women and girls. Leading role in that area belongs to the created in 2010 UNWomen, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A strong voice from Utah Valley University's 4th annual Women of the Mountains Conference is being heard around the world as well, declaring that women and children are suffering and there's something we can do about it.

To be honest with you I knew little about advocating gender equality, human rights, and sustainable development before this conference. I am sure many of my fellow students were as naïve as I.



Gulshan Tynystanova, Kyrgyzstan, Yankila Sherpa, Nepal and Mira Attokurova, Kyrgyzstan during the Conference

During the conference thanks to my knowledge of Russian, I was able to provide a protocol and translate for two women delegates from Kyrgyzstan, who have traveled far to make their message known. Mrs. Tynystanova and Mira Attokurova came from Central Asia to participate at Business Fair and to establish partnership with local tourist companies from the State of Utah. Something that intrigued me was their comments to me as we drove to the conference at Utah Valley University. Gulshan Tynystanova commented to me that our region was beautiful like theirs back home. "Does everyone here smile?" Mrs. Tynystanova asked us. Later the next day I watched her presentation at the conference which showed the struggle of women and children in her mountainous homeland. Was there anything that could be done for her country? Or other mountainous countries?



Mira Attokurova and I during the coffee break

I learned about Kyrgyzstan from Mrs. Tynystanova and her peer Mira Attokurova along with fellow students in an atmosphere that educated and engaged. What an incredible experience it was to enable students, desiring to get involved in the world, to grow relationships with inspirational women from other countries. The students and I learned first-hand what is happening overseas, and what we can do about it.



Yoga Breakout Session during Business Fair on October 9, 2015

The last day of the conference the students and delegates went to work on a service project in the community, hosted by Habitat for Humanity branch in Utah county, showing that the Women of the Mountains movement isn't just talk, but action.

The value of providing protocol these delegates and having first-hand experience is something the students here would never trade. Initiatives were set in motion, petitions were signed, and the Women of the Mountains are one step closer to having sustainable development and greater opportunities.

By Andre Jones, Utah Valley University student