

# Moderating Educational Panel During the Women of the Mountains Conference

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Serving on the student organizing committee and as a Moderator at the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference (WOMC) was a great experience. WOMC was gathered under the umbrella of the United Nations Mountain Partnership on October 7-9, 2015. It was hosted for the first time by students at Utah Valley University (UVU) and by Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU in particular. I was able to learn many new things, meet new people, and gain skills that could only be learned through hands-on and engaging learning.



***Diana Chaman Salas from Peru presents her paper during Education Panel***

As a member of the organizing committee I saw much of the groundwork put into the conference. The events leading up to the conference taught me about networking and meeting new people. I was able to invite different individuals to present at the conference, as well as see how those people help to serve the people in their communities. I was also able to raise some funds for the conference. These communication skills will be a benefit to me in the future as I pursue further education and in meeting career goals.

When the conference finally arrived, I was able to play a part as a moderator on the panel for education of women and children. It was the first time I had ever moderated, but I will admit it was a lot of work. Setting up the room, making sure I had presenter bios, having electronic equipment for presenters to use, and speaking in front of a room was a challenge. However, I gained organizational skills, as well as administrative skills. I allotted time for each presenter and advised them on when it would be their turn to present and when their time was nearing its end. I felt quite intimidated talking to professors, and others-that certainly had more knowledge and experience than me, and I was able to get very good feedback as well as a deeper understanding for each of their views.



***Noorani Barkat from Pakistan at the Habitat for Humanity site***

Noorani Barkat from Pakistan, who presented at Education panel, helped me to understand that it doesn't matter if you are just one individual, you can still influence and bless many lives in your community. She has helped her community in Pakistan by raising funds for building schools, serving as liaison to families who have women who would like to enter higher education, providing career counseling for women in her community, and serving the community in small and simple ways. She is a great example of strength and courage, and one who pursues dreams for a great and pure motive, to bless the lives of those in her home country. She certainly taught me and others about using your education to positively influence the lives of others.

It was also worth to mentioning how Noorani was able to come to UVU and contribute to the conference. When she submitted the abstract of her presentation to the conference, the student organizing committee took into account her dedication to the helping others and service to mountain communities in multiple ways and decided to help her to come to Orem, UT from Texas, where she is finishing her graduate studies at Texas A&M. Tony Medina, VP for logistics and Protocol of the organizing committee donated his SkyMiles points to cover her air travel and Deann Torsak, Executive Secretary of the conference accommodated her in her own home. As a result, it helped build one more tie with similar minded peers in one of the remote areas of South Asia.

The emphasis on the panel was obviously the importance of educating women and children. Each presenter could describe different reasons for why these things are important, but I felt an overall urgency for a few specific reasons. One of them is to help the community. Each presenter, though their opinions differed, emphasized that the more educated women and children are, the better off their communities. They are better able to use resources, gain independence, teach and learn from one another, and thrive-not just survive.

The other reason I saw the urgency for women's education are the events that are occurring in the world. The world is progressing rapidly, and if our women and children are not being educated, those societies will fall behind the others. One of the last things I actually realized

myself while listening to presentations is that the more educated women are the better they are able to help their children and families. Whether women use their education in an actual career or in the rearing of children, the knowledge they have gained will bless the lives of others as they nurture and raise knowledgeable children who will enter the society to serve and help others.

The overall conference was fantastic. The skills and experiences I was able to have will serve me far into the future. I am grateful I was able to participate in many ways and for the people I was able to meet.

***Georgina Wolfgramm, member of the organizing committee of the 2015 Women of the Mountains Conference***