

Hosting parallel event at CSW63

As members of Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) we gathered early Tuesday morning, March 19, 2019 at the Church Center of the United Nations to prepare the setup for our parallel event titled: “Student Engaged Learning to Empower Mountain Women and Girls.” UVU students spoke during the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63).



Michael Hinatsu, Vice President of UIMF moderated the parallel event

The event began with UIMF Vice President Michael Hinatsu welcoming the guests and thanking the co-sponsorship of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, an NGO with general consultative status with ECOSOC, and Utah Valley University for co-sponsoring the parallel event. He spoke about student engaged learning model at UVU and how it involves students, including non-traditional in the advocacy of the United Nations Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) agenda in the State of Utah and globally.

He then introduced our delegation and shared our goals towards advocating for mountain women and girls in Utah and globally since 2011, when UIMF was created by students to promote SMD as an engaged learning model, when students work as a group and faculty serves them as a mentor.



Dr. Baldomero Lago Speaks during parallel event



Taylor Bell, Student body President speaks during parallel event

We then hear from Dr. Baldomero Lago, UVU's CIO and Vice Rector for Global Engagement, and Mr. Taylor Bell, UVU's newly elected Student Body President, who is majoring in Political Science who express how the engaged learning methods practiced at Utah Valley University, prepares its students to become professionals and leaders; not only within the state, but across the globe.



Michael Hinatsu, Vice President of UIMF moderated the parallel event with Abdulrahman in the background

Michael Hinatsu then spoke on the issues concerning mountainous women and girls experiencing negligence at the national and international levels. Women in developing countries and mountainous communities, are vulnerable to food insecurity and stresses how education can empower others to address these issues surrounding the implementation of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Michael Hinatsu then introduced our 11-student team of members of the UIMF, who have investigated specific issues facing women and girls in our communities in Utah and worldwide.

Abdulrahman Alghanmi was the first to speak and is a UVU student from Saudi Arabia majoring in Political Science. He shared with audience how his research and contribution to the Youth and the Mountains journal and participation in UIMF events has enabled him to interact and follow the engaged learning model of UVU towards the advocacy of the United Nations sustainable development goals and mountain targets.



Ms. Viktoriia Bahrii speaks during the parallel event

Ms. Viktoriia Bahrii, Director of Logistics for UIMF and Political Science major with minors in National Security Studies and Mathematics at Utah Valley University is an international student from central Ukraine. She shared her experiences on engaged learning at UVU, including hosting of Ambassadors and participating in Days for Girls, an NGO from Utah service project. Through the skills she obtained from engaged learning and the networking experiences, Victoria shared how her participation has encouraged her to study how she could help women and girls in the Ukrainian Carpathian mountains.



Ms. Noorani Barkat speaks about agriculture in Pakistan

Ms. Noorani Barkat is from Hunza Valley and is currently working on her Ph.D. in agriculture from Washington State University. The role of agriculture in empowering women to end poverty in the mountains of Pakistan was the focus of Ms. Noorani Barkat's statement. She shared her personal relations to agriculture in Pakistan and her goals of educating the youth of her society and motivating them to never give up on their dreams. She was invited to join our delegation as a result of her involvement with UIMF since 2005 when she participated at the fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference in 2015. She also plans to continue to work with Utah International Mountain Forum and other organizations to come up with initiatives that can help farming communities worldwide.



Ms. Hannah Bieker speaks about empowering mountain women and girls

Ms. Hannah Bieker, UIMF Member, Rotaract Liaison, and National Security major at Utah Valley University is also the author of the book, “Lives, Fortunes and Sacred Honor: The Making of an American.” She told about her desire to inspire her peers to empower their own communities and work together to empower mountain women in developing countries. This can be accomplished through hard work, being educated and having the right mindset. She spent time with Rotaract, a student club - partner of Rotary International that assists fellow Utahns of all ages. Through her participation of the “Burrito Project” she helped feed homeless and low-income families. Her internship at the Utah State Capitol and United States Senate in Washington D.C was very important for her. But her involvement with IMF has allowed her to address real-world problems as a group with a faculty member serving as a mentor. Hannah Bieker hopes to continue to contribute to initiatives that empower women and girls in mountainous regions.



Ms. Rebecca Bindraban speaks during the parallel event

Ms. Rebecca Bindraban, the Editor in Chief for the Youth and the Mountains Journal, shared details of the journal and what goals the journal is intended to achieve. The establishment of this journal came when 19 members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU contributed research on mountain ranges to the Mountain Partnership Report on Sustainable Mountain Development. The empowerment of mountain communities and women is a focus of attention for student research in the journal and it includes copies of official documents of the ECOSOC and U.S. Congress, highlighting UVU's student engaged learning model and the Utah International Mountain Forum contribution to SMD advocacy. The journal provides a perspective on SMD in the Rocky Mountain region and worldwide. Rebecca is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal during 2017-2018.



Ms. Megan Davis speaks during the event

Ms. Megan Davis, the UNA-USA Liaison and Director of Public Relations for UIMF and Political Science major at Utah Valley University discussed the role that mountain women can have on building sustainable societies. The WOMC's provided UVU the opportunity to represent Utah as the best model state of sustainable mountain development and as one of the first states in the United States to allow women's suffrage. She shares her personal professional experience and expresses how these great initiatives have inspired her along with other women and girls in Utah to improve lives of their communities.

Mr. William Gum-Causey, a non-traditional student majoring in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Policy, created a panel to highlight the problems facing indigenous nations, titled "UIMF: Addressing Issues of Indigenous Sovereign Nations" where members of sovereign tribal governments attended and addressed the 17 UN sustainable development goals in their communities. Serious concerns were raised about a lack of access to a market, high unemployment, drugs abuse, housing problems, the dwindling population on reservations, and physical abuse. In

the US, these issues can be addressed through initiatives within states and by the federal government but CSW63 needs to include language in the final documents emphasizing international cooperation to address these crimes that affect members of indigenous people. Utah has taken it upon itself to address issues facing members of indigenous tribal nations.

Ms. Hailee Hodgson, a media specialist for UIMF and national security major compared initial workforce participation rates in Utah women. She shared how Utah's gender wage gap is one of the highest in the nation, Utah women are much more likely to work minimum wage jobs, and they have lower levels of educational achievement. This causes challenges in finding and affording quality child care, which is a major barrier in order for mothers to work. Utah's Office of Rural Development began implementing programs designed to boost rural business growth and employment, and Utah's state government has recently passed bills incentivizing companies to outsource developments to rural areas. This has inspired Hailee Hodgson to work in her community on issues related to women in order to create opportunities for women in the workforce.

Following Hailee's remarks, I shared how the critical issue of the opioid crisis currently spreading across the United States, impacts women and girls of Utah. Opioid related overdose is ranked the highest reason for death in Utah. Maternal death is a growing problem among pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorders and opioid misuse during pregnancy has led to the issue of withdrawal syndromes in newborns. Utah's actions towards improvement and prevention by working with The Utah Statewide Information and Analysis Center, The United States Drug Enforcement Administration and pharmaceuticals has led to the collection of information at emergency rooms and from poison control centers, medical examiner's reports, forensic labs and police stations, which has helped spot emerging threats and decrease opioid related issues in the state.

Mr. Ezra Pugliano, a Senior at Utah Valley University studying Political Science shared his experience of volunteering on the International Women's Day of service at UVU, which is a project affiliated with the UVU Women's Success Center. He shared how the best way to empower women and girls is through private businesses. Company with a global outreach have the potential to invest in empowering women by hiring qualified women as key players in businesses and

investing in the future. For example, providing college tuition reimbursement for employees, many of whom are women. This allows employees to receive degrees, that can in turn allow them to invest in their community with the knowledge they acquire. Ezra Pugliano's goal is to continue to raise awareness among his coworkers, colleagues, and friends about the responsibility we all have to empower women.

Mr. Aldon Trimble is a senior at Utah Valley University advocating for engaging students and sustainable development goals. He shared his personal experience of time spent helping re-charter UVU Rotaract as part of UIMF during spring 2017 and then to co-host the director for outreach division of the UN Department of Public Information. He stated how students in local development and social projects have been an indispensable resource for the local mountain community. In his involvement at UVU's Office of New Urban Mechanics, which is associated with Oxford University, the most recent project they have, seeks to fully understand the consequences and issues surrounding the children of incarcerated parents in the state of Utah. They identified several issues, namely recidivism caused by the absence of a parent in the home and exploitation by private groups with contracts associated with local prisons and jails. They are working towards solutions surrounding proper regulation and rights management for the incarcerated, which would allow better ease of access for family members to continue their relationships with their incarcerated family members and vice versa. They are hoping The Office of New Urban Mechanics can help Utah become a beacon and example for implementation of the UN sustainable development goals.

Michael Hinatsu then added closing remarks, thanked his colleagues for their presentations and thanked the audience for their attendance.

Under the leadership of Michael Hinatsu, within two semesters, the UIMF coalition of clubs advocating for sustainable mountain development goals, was able to make all preparations for the visit and contribution to the agenda of the CSW63, with Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, a UVU faculty, serving as a mentor.

Laila Mitchell; a media specialist for the UIMF and is majoring in National Security