

## **Statement**

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**67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**Parallel Event**

*Empowering Mountain Women through Inclusive Student-engaged Learning Educational Initiative*

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Hello. I am thankful for this amazing opportunity to speak with you today. Innovation, change, education, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, what an amazing theme.

Women around the world are at an increased risk of human rights abuses. In Guinea, an estimated 97% of women are forcefully circumcised and face domestic violence, and discrimination. In Guinea more than half of women are married before the age of 18 and only 25% of women attend secondary or high school. These two are correlated and crucial issues in society. I find this heartbreaking. Education is a right that helps mitigate many of these abuses by empowering women with knowledge. The UVU-developed Student-engaged Learning model, or SEL, can provide a means to create the necessary solutions.

“The Inclusive, Co-curricular SEL Model provides local mountain communities opportunities by encouraging students to work inclusively as a group to solve real-world problems with a faculty serving as a mentor.” My participation in UIMF has opened my eyes. As students, we not only participated in classes, and studied for midterms, but we also formed a community to advocate today. We raised funds by selling oranges and ran club rushes and had countless meetings with hours of work and preparation, and here we are now. We hosted the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the US and Canada to discuss ways Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic can mutually benefit one another. My point is the SEL model helps dreams come to fruition. These events are testaments to that. Mountain communities globally must come together to achieve true sustainable development. SEL can solve inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and infrastructure issues at local levels to increase access to secondary education for girls.

I urge Guinea to create more policies to protect, promote, and fulfill the economic, social, and cultural rights of its citizens, including the right to work, education, health and adequate living standards. I urge the students and especially women of Guinea to implement this model, and advocate for change. Let us come together as mountain regions and find sustainable solutions.