

**Statement**  
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**Osh Technological University**  
**67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Side event**  
***“Advocating for mountain women and girls’ education through student-engaged learning.”***  
**March 8, 2023**

It is a great honor to speak here with you today! I am proud, as a student of Osh Technological University, to be from the Kyrgyz Republic, whose request led to the United Nations declaring 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development.

I would like to share with you the experience I have had as a Mountain Woman in Kyrgyzstan. Two years ago, my mother took me to a village located in the Aksy district of the Jalal-Abad region. The poverty there was immense. The first thing I noticed was a worn dirt road, sprinkled along the sides with huge boulders. Having noticed that there was no reliable public transport, I thought that the problems would be limited to this. Of course, behind the beautiful landscapes and fresh air there was much hiding which didn’t occur to me.

Women and girls are the most vulnerable in these rural conditions. Their rights are limited, with wives and mothers simply the weaker sex. Living in the mountains for a woman means they must give up a lot of modern opportunities and even their dreams. Domestic violence is on the rise. According to the 2020 Kyrgyzstan Voluntary National Report, domestic violence has increased by 4,800 cases per year. 20% of marriages in Kyrgyzstan are by abduction and 6% are forced. Marriage by abduction occurs twice as often in rural areas as in cities. In addition to the above difficulties, natural disasters remain a major danger for mountain families and women. Climate change is adding to these dangers, increasing the rate of natural disasters and food access. There is also a lack of doctors, and technology.

Through student-engaged learning, my friends at Osh Technological University and I have addressed these problems at events such as the Commission of the Status of Women. SEL encourages students, like us, to work together to solve real-world issues, with faculty serving as a mentor. It is an education program that can be used by any school in mountain regions. For the past 2 years, we have partnered with the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University, to bring awareness of the needs of mountain women and girls worldwide. Together with other students around the world, we have met regularly over zoom to discuss the issues facing our mountain homes. The use of modern IT programs have given us the tools to work as a group and speak at a global level.

Through this model, in particular with student clubs and technology such as Zoom, our universities in the Kyrgyz Republic can continue to work together with other groups to change our own lives and the lives of our families, as well as mountain communities worldwide.