

Statement

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Parallel Event

Empowering Mountain Women through Inclusive Student-engaged Learning Educational Initiative

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Hello, my name is Smith Griggs. I am a senior at Utah Valley University. As a student and educator, I care deeply about the act of listening, learning from others of different backgrounds, and using these experiences to inform social change. As a former fellow with UVU's Center for Social Impact, through the Student-Engaged Learning model, I've facilitated events helping fellow students learn how to break down and develop effective interventions to prevalent social issues through systems and design thinking. The SEL Model has only further deepened my understanding of these principles.

Growing globalization and neoliberal practices in Peru's Andean Mountain regions are continuing to complicate and challenge the lives of Indigenous women. NGOs and governmental groups have been assisting mountain communities in learning how to work in a market economy, but these interventions often tend to be one-sided and have furthermore perpetuated a continuing silence of the women they've been working to empower. Women from mountain communities, having faced ongoing oppression in the forms of violence, patriarchal structures, and colonialism, often struggle in speaking candidly to the challenges they've dealt with. In safe spaces, many have admitted to frustrations with these new market models that emphasize individualism and competition where reciprocity and community used to be staples of their culture. These models, while perhaps helping in growing local economies, have also been lending to many of the silencing obstacles mountain women have been facing.

Rather than assuming these groups' needs, we must help in providing mountain Indigenous women a platform and a voice in building their communities and cultures. This means providing a means for them to share their stories in order to create solidarity and promote safety in their communities and providing accessible education to young women and girls that is led by local leaders. The Student Engaged Learning Model empowers students and/or community members to work together in groups to solve problems or build Sustainable Mountain Development interventions. Implementing this model in Peru's mountain regions could be a critical step in helping women build leadership, team building, and communication skills that can help them cultivate a voice in building their communities and futures.