

**STATEMENT**  
**Priyanka Prem Kumar**  
**Utah International Mountain Forum**  
**69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Parallel Event,**  
***“An Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model to Empower Mountain Women and Girls”***  
**March 10, 2025**  
**“Assessing progress made towards gender equality in India through Student Engaged Learning”**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Priyanka Prem Kumar. I am a researcher and data analyst who primarily works on improving sustainable food systems and sustainable education, particularly in rural and mountainous regions.

According to Statista, India's young demographic dividend can drive its economic growth and support the SDGs by 2030. The World Bank expressed concern regarding crimes against women, leading to a decline in female labor force participation. Meanwhile, 451 Research, a technology research group within S&P Global Market Intelligence, recently corrected a Western stereotype that, gender inequality in the Information Technology (IT) area is much worse in India in comparison with the West. The number of women employed in the IT industry in India now makes up 36% of the IT workforce, of which 51% are entry-level recruits and over 25% are in managerial positions. Fields like data science, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and UX design are also seeing increasing female participation.

My professional career is an example of the growing role of women in India in the IT area. I have my Masters in Electronics Engineering from Anna University, India, and am now pursuing my second Masters in Data Science from Indiana University, Bloomington. During my internship as a researcher for an organization called AI For Rural (AIR), our work in rural and mountainous regions of Ghana, and Niger was to improve food security and reduce poverty amongst female smallholders. AI For Rural has partnered with Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU since 2015 with a focus on promoting Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) through Student Engaged Learning (SEL) in the State of Utah and globally. My presentation at the UN Conference “Why It Matters” hosted at Utah Valley University in October 2022, focused on improving the livelihoods of mountainous people in India using sustainable development with the help of Artificial Intelligence to empower and educate the farmers to maximize productivity. My current research comprises comparing and analyzing the economic status and educational outcomes in mountainous regions across various levels

The 2023 World Economic Forum's Gender Gap report stated that India had closed 64.3% of the gender gap and achieved full parity in education enrollment. However, only 21% of women have access to mobile and internet, restricting access to financial services, education, and jobs. UN Women in India noted increased investment in women's empowerment but highlighted that social norms and limited financing, hinder progress. As India progresses towards its “Viksit Bharat @2047” vision, collective efforts are needed to create opportunities for women to thrive as they are key to achieving the SDGs.

The outcome of the SEL model highlights mainly the efforts of traditional and non-traditional students to jointly develop new ideas for SMD and help their communities while their teacher mentors them. SEL could also help implement the UNGA resolution “Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions.” I hope that universities in India will adopt this model soon. I am proud to speak at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Thank you