

MOUNTAIN WOMEN OF THE WORLD: CHALLENGES, RESILIENCE, AND COLLECTIVE POWER

AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

Women play a pivotal role in environmental protection and socio-economic development in mountainous regions, often serving as primary managers of resources, guardians of biodiversity, and custodians of traditional knowledge. These women are integral to the sustainability of fragile mountain ecosystems. Empowering them is not only critical for eradicating hunger and poverty but also for unlocking their potential as leaders, innovators, and agents of change. However, entrenched discriminatory social norms continue to restrict their access to strategic resources, leadership roles, and equal opportunities, limiting their potential to act as economic agents and builders of resilience. Our research underscores the stories and voices of mountain women, highlighting the multiple and diverse challenges they face, particularly in rural areas and within the mountain tourism sector.. These include economic hardships, gender-based discrimination, and restricted access to entrepreneurial and educational opportunities. In many regions, women face systemic barriers to acquiring skills and training that could enhance their economic prospects. Furthermore, they encounter a lack of support for business ventures, inadequate access to credit and markets, and limited representation in decision-making processes. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these issues, intensifying the socio-economic inequalities that hinder their ability to thrive and contribute fully to their communities. The study builds on the challenges and opportunities identified in the 2022 report, Mountain Women of the World: Challenges, Resilience, and Collective Power, which explored the lives of women in mountain areas in a post-COVID-19 world. It draws from in-depth, in-person interviews with 313 mountain women across Argentina, Chile, Italy, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Bolivia, and Tanzania, revealing critical insights into their experiences and the collective actions necessary to support their endeavors. This presentation will provide an overview of the key findings from our research, as showcased in the publications launched in collaboration with the Mountain Partnership/FAO and our Mountain Women of the World Network: Mountain Women of the World: Challenges, Resilience, and Collective Power (2022) and Mountain Women of the World: Shaping Change for the Common Good (2023). Focusing on insights gathered from interviews in Kenya and Tanzania, we will spotlight the transformative stories of these women and the collective actions needed to support their empowerment. Despite often coming from low-income backgrounds and balancing the demands of motherhood and family care, these women demonstrate resilience and adaptability in traditionally male-dominated environments. Through this research, we aim to present a roadmap for empowering mountain women, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies, enhanced training and educational opportunities, and support for entrepreneurial ventures. By dismantling barriers to equality and amplifying the voices of these women, we can foster a more sustainable and inclusive future for mountainous regions.

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