

The Thimphu Declaration

Preamble

The 250 participants — mountain women, members of civil society organisations and NGOs, policy makers, entrepreneurs, media professionals, researchers, representatives of development agencies and the donor community — attending the Celebrating Mountain Women conference in Thimphu, Bhutan, October 1-4, 2002, held in the context of the International Year of Mountains (IYM), submit the following Thimphu Declaration to the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit (BGMS), and call upon the international community to:

Include the perspectives of mountain women and the principles of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Bishkek Declaration;

Strengthen mountain women's influence in decisions in public affairs and ensure a strong presence of women in all mountain partnerships;

Build networks of solidarity and endorse and support the Global Mountain Women's Partnership (GMWP).

We declare that

- 1) Without women, it is impossible to achieve sustainable development in mountain areas. Women have crucial knowledge about resource use, traditional health systems, and social, cultural, and spiritual customs. Their productive activities contribute to the economy; they promote family and community development; they create innovative solutions to cope with change under harsh physical and political conditions. In many mountain regions they constitute well over 50 per cent of the population.
- 2) Without peace, an un-degraded and uncontaminated environment, and food security, which are currently under heavy stress in

mountain areas worldwide, it is impossible for mountain women to nurture their families, sustain livelihoods, carry out business activities, contribute to the well-being of their communities, and protect their environment.

- 3) Without gender equality and social justice, and a supportive social, political, legal, and economic environment, mountain women cannot make their voices heard, and exercise rights that enable them to contribute their full potential to community development and conservation of natural and cultural resources.
- 4) Without access to health services, education and training, recreation and adequate infrastructure — water, sanitation, roads, markets, credit — and without addressing the remoteness and physical challenges of the mountain environment, poverty, and social and political marginalisation that prevail in most of these areas, mountain women's ability to fulfil their roles is seriously impaired.
- 5) Without effective policies, networks, partnerships and alliances at the local, national, regional, and international levels, mountain women's economic, social, and political marginalisation will continue to hamper their development and the development of their communities.

These realities are not given sufficient recognition, and are even negated in some areas. Moreover, women are not adequately integrated into planning and decision making processes at all levels, and do not have effective access to, control of, and ownership of resources.

In view of this, we call upon the United Nations, the international community, and the regional, national, and local authorities and organisations to:

Heed the voice and concerns of mountain women and their perspective on peace, natural resource use, and sustainable mountain development,

Provide the institutional and financial support for future policy and action on the principles of gender equality and gender mainstreaming,

Strengthen mountain women's right to resources and their role in their communities and cultures,

Promote a rights-based approach to development and strengthen economic and technological opportunities to empower mountain women.

We recommend the following:

1. Inform mountain women about their human rights, including political, economic, property, environmental, health, cultural, intellectual, and other rights, and provide adequate training in claiming these rights;
2. Promote and enforce gender equitable laws, policies, and programmes that facilitate participation of mountain women in the management of natural resources, and secure access to ecosystem goods and services;
3. Advocate that policies and laws provide equality-based political, social, and economic rights to mountain women. Ensure that such policies and laws exist for aspects that specifically address women's well-being and rights;
4. Promote equitable representation of mountain women in all decision-making bodies, and advocate their participation in negotiation and decision-making processes at all levels, including in conflict prevention and resolution;
5. Ensure that health programmes focus on reproductive and sexual health problems, including HIV/AIDS, and encourage the involvement of men in the prevention of these problems;
6. Advocate addressing mountain women's reproductive and sexual health rights and support community-based health care and insurance;
7. Create awareness and appreciation of gender equality issues and traditional health practices among all kinds of health professionals;
8. Integrate indigenous knowledge systems into formal education, and develop alternative,

flexible and context-specific curricula, including indigenous and practical knowledge, and employ indigenous teaching staff;

9. Promote communication among mountain women and communities while preventing the erosion of linguistic diversity;
10. Encourage research and disseminate the results of mountain women's indigenous knowledge in cultural and religious systems, natural resource use, traditional farming and conservation techniques, and health practices;
11. Collect and document disaggregated data on mountain people (by sex, age, region, etc.) in all fields;
12. Ensure increased access to information about businesses, markets, technology, and other livelihood opportunities that utilise and conserve the diversity of mountain environments, and promote training programmes and social services to meet the needs of mountain women;
13. Encourage and promote fair trade and ethical business in mountain areas in order to ensure that producers reap a fair share of the benefits from the sale of their products;
14. Promote peace to prevent mountain women and their families from suffering the consequences of armed conflict, eradicate trafficking of women and children in poor mountain areas, stop domestic violence, and promote social programmes which aim to overcome violent cultural practices;
15. Promote physical and social infrastructure (roads, electricity, telecommunications, markets, health care, schools, etc.) that are sensitive and responsive to women's needs and enhance income generation and entrepreneurship among mountain women, reduce their workload, and improve the quality of their lives;
16. Analyse and mitigate the impacts of increasing privatisation of resources within mountain communities, and create safety nets where the impacts of globalisation destabilise mountain communities;
17. Provide gender budgets and increase budgetary allocation for mountain women's initiatives to make development sustainable.

Adopted October 4, 2002
Thimphu, Bhutan