

Background: Mountain Context

The biophysical characteristics of mountain environments - verticality, fragility, hazard-proneness, cold temperatures and even thin air - invoke, at least to the outsider, a harsh environment, wrought with difficulties and suffering for those who inhabit such spaces. To be sure, there are many constraints inherent to life in the mountains that are not faced by lowlanders, but there are also many positive attributes which residents affix to the place they call home. Both limitations and opportunities posed by mountain biophysical characteristics will be considered here to present a context through which to understand mountain women's lives.