



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP SECRETARIAT
ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Cover and back cover photographs:
Children playing in the mountains in Kyrgyzstan
©FAO/Mirbek Kadraliev

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A mountain woman in Bolivia
©Alessia Vita

A MESSAGE FROM THE MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP SECRETARIAT COORDINATOR



Yuka Makino
@FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

In so many ways, 2020 has been a year that brought unforeseen challenges to many in our community, but it also brought us closer together.

As the COVID-19 global health crisis struck, in mountains the pandemic added urgency to an already difficult situation. Restrictions imposed by various countries amplified the vulnerabilities of mountain communities who depend mainly on agriculture, tourism and remittances for their survival.

At the Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS), we quickly adapted to change and reached out to our members virtually, showing that digital connectivity can ensure inclusiveness worldwide.

Although the pandemic put a halt to many physical events and high-level processes, it gave us an opportunity to include many Mountain Partnership (MP) members in virtual meetings who would not have normally attended face-to-face events. On International Mountain Day, more than 80 events – from online webinars and virtual book presentations, to physically distanced hikes and outdoor events – spread the message far and wide that mountains matter. Our online capacity development courses were able to engage more students, with IPROMO and GROW training both increasing attendance by 25 percent compared to 2019.

In 2020, we witnessed the leading role of young mountain activists. The MPS organized a series of initiatives, including “Sparkling change in mountain biodiversity through youth”, a web dialogue featuring a panel of seven youth mountain champions from around the world who addressed sustainable mountain development and biodiversity conservation. We welcomed our new Mountain Partnership Goodwill Ambassador, Nepalese trail and sky runner Mira Rai. A former National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, Rai describes herself as a “daughter of the mountains”. She is also the founder of the Mira Rai Initiative, a platform that empowers aspiring female trail runners in Nepal.

We continued sharing knowledge and data for evidence-based policy and promoted this at high-level events. On International Mountain Day, we released the study *Vulnerability of mountain peoples to food insecurity: Updated data and analysis of drivers* conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations (FAO), the MPS and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The study shows that the number of mountain people vulnerable to food insecurity in developing countries increased from 243 million to almost 350 million between 2000 and 2017. It is likely that the impact of COVID-19 has further exacerbated this critical condition. The study calls for policies to improve the resilience of mountain ecosystems and support innovation, research and investments.

Innovation in mountains is an opportunity to promote transformative actions that can increase resilience. This year, we launched our Participatory Guarantee System in mountains, the first-ever mountain network that focuses on the active participation of farmers, consumers and other relevant stakeholders. It aims to ensure that production chains are equitable and organic. The Mountain Partnership Products Initiative scaled up its operations through an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme's Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme and Slow Food International, adding five new countries.

In October 2020, the MPS and Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries began a three-year project in Peru and the Philippines with the goal of enhancing the capacities of institutions and communities to apply the risk-based watershed management approach to agricultural value chains.

Throughout 2020, we collected and shared stories from our members around the world. These spotlights take us to remote Himalayan communities in Ladakh, India, where solar power and critical medical equipment were provided to health centres. We travel to Latin America where smallholders in Peru promoted the health benefits of goldenberry jams, and then to Africa where a 38-kilometre race to the peak of Mount Cameroon helped raise awareness about mountain issues. We hope that exchanging knowledge about the challenges faced by mountain communities as well as the many best practices that have been developed in overcome them can help to inspire others and galvanize them into action.

The impact of COVID-19 further deepens concern as to whether the Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved by 2030 in mountains. The answer will depend largely on how we work together with our mountain communities to continue building their resilience to health, climate and disaster risks. At the MPS, we remain committed to building forward better and ensuring a sustainable, equitable future for all.

Yuka Makino

Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat

COVID-19 and the road to recovery for mountain people

Mountain people are among the world's poorest citizens, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their vulnerability to a range of challenges that include climate change, poverty and food insecurity. Despite their often remote locations, mountain communities have not been cushioned from the health impacts of the disease.

With little warning, mountain communities in many parts of the world have seen their precarious livelihoods disrupted, causing a sharp economic decline and soaring unemployment, often with serious social implications. Poor access to health care and hospitals has put mountain people at particular risk. In some areas, mountain economies based on agriculture and tourism have all but collapsed, pushing entire families into hunger and poverty. Just as input supplies and market linkages have been interrupted, so too have the systems that formed the foundation of household food security, and the fragile micro-economy that they supported.

In mountain regions highly dependent on remittances from emigrant workers, such as the Hindu Kush Himalaya, reduced mobility and fewer economic opportunities have taken a heavy toll, reversing gains made in improving access to children's education, as well as in narrowing gender, social and economic inequalities, and combating maternal and infant mortality.

Nowhere more than in mountain environments will the need be greater to build forward better, ensuring that the post-pandemic recovery is based on a green economy fully benefitting local communities, underpinned by sustainability. Here, upland communities have a natural advantage, rooted in their often symbiotic relationship with nature, their role as stewards of the mountains vesting them with an innate disposition to preserve their resources for the generations to come.

COVID-19: The Partnership responds and adapts

Central to the strategy needed to ensure a sustainable recovery for mountain communities will be clear commitments to strengthening agricultural value chains and promoting economic development and livelihoods diversification. Around the world, MP members have responded to some of the challenges posed by COVID-19, and the opportunities that it presents to construct a future based on resilience and inclusiveness.

“Nowhere more than in mountain environments will the need be greater to build forward better.”



Women doing a traditional “Jhora” dance in India
©Amit Sah




Mountain Partnership members rally to pandemic challenge

Around the world, MP members have stepped up to help communities cope with the pandemic and to develop innovative ways of connecting. In Nepal, the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) supported vulnerable mountain communities through awareness-building and distributed sanitation and hygiene kits to families and face masks to health workers. Several MP members have turned to virtual channels to build solidarity. The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association used social media to promote the country's mountains. From lockdown in Italy, Slow Food International urged all citizens to choose “good, clean and fair food” with a video message underscoring how its work is more important now than ever.

CHINAR establishes a school library in Bageshwar, India
©Ram Singh Koranga





CHINAR helps families with food packages

An initiative launched by the Central Himalayan Institute for Nature and Applied Research (CHINAR) has helped to temper some of the secondary effects of the pandemic on Himalayan communities in India. Disruptions to food supplies have had a serious impact on people living in remote villages, a situation compounded by unfavourable weather conditions, which have badly affected mountain farmers. The COVID-19 Relief Programme implemented by CHINAR, with support from the Wipro Foundation, provided assistance to more than 700 families living in 23 villages. The programme distributed food packages including rice, wheat flour, lentils, sugar, cooking oil and tea for each household.

CHINAR supports families with COVID-19 relief packages
©Ram Singh Koranga

COVID-19 testing for mountain communities

In Portugal, Mountain Partnership (MP) member the Centro de Investigação de Montanha set up a COVID-19 testing facility for elderly community members in the country's mountainous Trás-os-Montes region. At the invitation of the national government, the organization converted its main research building on the Bragança campus into a testing centre staffed by more than 30 researchers. The volunteer team received preparatory training in hygiene and safety, and was provided with safety equipment, biosafety materials and all the tools necessary for genetic material analysis of samples from residents and workers in care homes and other social institutions.



CIMO establishes a COVID-19 testing facility in Portugal
©Carlos Seiti H. Shiraishi

Global Himalayan Expedition brings solar power to remote medical centres

In reaction to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, and building on the fundamental premise of access to energy, Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) took up the challenge of setting up solar-powered health centres in Indian mountain regions where limited access to healthcare continues to be a challenge due to geographical barriers and limited infrastructure. In the Purakhasia area of Meghalaya, a primary healthcare centre catering to more than 27 000 people in the remote northeast Himalayan region – less than one kilometre from the border to Bangladesh – was one of the first to be transformed. GHE also setup a 7 kW solar plant for the medical sub-centre at Sato, Ladakh, to ensure 24/7 electricity for treatment. Additionally, critical medical equipment such as ventilators and autoclaves were also provided.

GHE provides medical equipment to remote centres in India
©Global Himalayan Expedition



GHE installs solar power in remote medical centres in the Indian Himalayas
©Global Himalayan Expedition

Opportunities for mountain areas in a post-pandemic world

Mountain locations in Europe and North America are likely to be more popular in a post-pandemic scenario as people living in cities seek out greener settings with a lower population density. In a lecture given in May 2020 by Andrea Membretti of EURAC Research, the expert on migration to mountain territories, he outlined some of the openings that the new trend promises to create. One important challenge will involve striking a balance between people's desire to migrate to less densely populated rural areas and the need to respect mountains' carrying capacity as well as safeguard mountains and the ecosystem services they provide to highland and lowland peoples.

Mountain town in Verbier, Switzerland
©Sebastian Staines/Unsplash



Moving mountains higher up on the 2030 Agenda

The year 2020 ushered in the United Nations Decade of Action, and with it the need to accelerate sustainable solutions to the world's most pressing challenges, such as hunger, poverty and unequal access to health, education and decent work, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As providers of biodiversity, food, water, medicine and clean energy, mountains play a pivotal role in achieving a number of these objectives, so protecting them benefits the whole planet.

Yet the timeline for action is narrowing. Mountain people are increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity and are exposed to other challenges that are specifically targeted in the SDGs, including natural hazards, climate change, unsustainable land management and poor health care.

In order to advance the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in mountains, there is an urgent need to step up momentum to strengthen the resilience of mountain people and address

the threats affecting their livelihoods and ecosystems. With the clock ticking away, it is imperative that decision-makers develop mountain-related policies and improve opportunities for mountain people in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

Afghanistan-Tajikistan border area
©Christopher Wilton-Steer



Survey monitors progress toward implementing the 2030 Agenda in mountains

A survey conducted by the Secretariat among MP member focal points set out to monitor the progress made related to their pledges regarding the Framework for Action (FFA). Anchored in the 2030 Agenda and other relevant United Nations processes related to sustainable mountain development, the FFA was endorsed by all members of the MP in December 2017 at the Fifth Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership. In the survey, questions were addressed to the three categories of MP members – governments, intergovernmental organizations and major group organizations – eliciting a variety of responses, from the updating of development policies to integrate the sustainable development and conservation of mountains, to increasing awareness of mountain issues. A common theme in the survey results was the challenge of implementing the FFA – and sustainable mountain development in general – with limited financial resources. All members highlighted the need to focus greater attention on mountains at national and international levels.



Life in the Andes mountains
©Daniel Boyano Sotillo

Raising awareness about the vulnerability of mountain communities for policy action

Despite the many goods and services provided by mountains to lowlands, more than one in two rural mountain dwellers in developing countries lives in areas where the daily availability of calories and protein is below the minimum threshold needed for a healthy life. A study launched by the MPS and partners on International Mountain Day 2020 found that the number of mountain people vulnerable to food insecurity in developing countries increased from 243 million to almost 350 million between 2000 and 2017. The information produced in this study is a call to national authorities and the international community to give urgent attention to the threats affecting mountain people and their livelihoods and ecosystems in the spirit of the SDGs.

Child and man in the Himalayas
©Pradeep Mehta



The report *Vulnerability of mountain peoples to food insecurity: Updated data and analysis of drivers* highlighted that around 275 million rural people vulnerable to food insecurity were estimated to live in mountain areas that have already been affected by natural hazards. The study found that mountain people's vulnerability to food insecurity in the developing world is compounded by the occurrence of natural hazards and armed conflicts that disrupt livelihoods or put strain on the natural resources on which mountain people depend.

Settlement on a mountain top in India
©Udit Sah

Mountain green cover and the SDGs

The MPS and the Forest Resources Assessment Team of the Forestry Division are the focal points for monitoring SDG indicator 15.4.2, the Mountain Green Cover Index. The current methodology has been developed by the FAO Land Use Monitoring and Innovation Team, and allows for a more efficient and uniform data collection process while also making the data validation process easier for countries. New global baseline data were collected for 2000, 2010, 2015 and 2018, and presented to the United Nations Secretary-General in December 2020.



Mountains matter for biodiversity

Mainstreaming mountains was high on the agenda at an Informal Mountain Gathering held in Rome in February organized on the margins of the Second Meeting of the Open Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Delivering the keynote speech, MPS Coordinator Yuka Makino described how mountain biodiversity's role as host to about half the world's biodiversity hotspots makes it imperative that mountains are explicitly included in the Framework.

The gathering saw the launch by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Carpathian Convention of the Elevating Mountains in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework 2.0, a policy brief on the relevance of mountain biodiversity. Highlighting the opportunities offered by this rich resource, the brief also exposes its fragility and presents policy recommendations to protect mountain ecosystems.



Forget-me-not flowers growing in the mountains of Shahrsta, Tajikistan
©Vakhidova Maryam





Signing up to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

The United Kingdom-based not-for-profit company and MP member Active Remedy Ltd. became a signatory of the 2020 Edinburgh Declaration on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Declaration sets out the aims of subnational governments, cities and local authorities for preserving biodiversity in the coming decade. As part of its recommendations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Active Remedy Ltd. has urged an ecosystem-based adaptation approach, along with greater attention to mountains through full implementation of Target 6.6 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This target specifically aims to “protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes”.

Winner, youth category, IMD Photo Contest 2020:
“Esperanza”, Ecuador
©Jaime Venegas



Accelerating action for mountains

A virtual event held on the sidelines of the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) offered an opportunity to identify strategies, promote actions, and build commitments to support sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and livelihoods in mountains, particularly in light of the impacts of COVID-19. The event featured interventions by a number of MP members, including the Governments of Argentina, Italy,

Kyrgyzstan, Malawi and Switzerland as well as the FAO Liaison Office in New York, Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) and the Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN). One hundred and thirty participants attended.

The valuable contribution of working animals to mountain livelihoods was highlighted at the Climate Week NYC

side event, “Working animals: Key to climate change”, organized by the Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare. In mountain areas of many low- and middle-income countries, working animals provide transport and draught power, ease the burden of collecting water for women and children, and offer sustainable solutions in areas affected by environment-related disasters and climate change.

Addressing climate change adaptation in mountain areas

The first phase of the Adaptation at Altitude programme began in 2020 with a focus on increasing the climate change resilience and adaptation capacities of mountain communities and ecosystems. It aims to improve the knowledge of appropriate climate change adaptation strategies in the mountains and transfer this knowledge through science-policy platforms to inform decision-making in national, regional and global policy processes. The four outcomes that Adaptation at Altitude seeks to achieve are: data, information and monitoring; regional science-policy exchange and collaborate action; knowledge generation and sharing; and policy mainstreaming. These outcomes, when tackled simultaneously with a long time horizon, will assist in overcoming some of the most significant challenges in mountain development. This collaborative programme is co-supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and includes partners who are experts in mountain adaptation: CONDESAN, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Mountain Research Initiative, Stockholm Environment Institute, UNEP, University of Geneva and Zoï Environment Network.

Top Left: Shepherd in the Himalayas with three donkeys
©Yuka Makino

Argentina Patagonia
©Arto Marttinen/Unsplash

Raising mountains on the climate agenda

In 2020, the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) network was actively engaged in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment (AR6), with members contributing to the Cross-Chapter Paper on Mountains. The Third Lead Authors took place in January and February in Faro, Portugal, where work began to prepare the Second Order Draft (SOD). Following the SOD submission in November 2020, the MRI hosted a number of events and outreach activities to enhance the participation of the mountain research community in providing comments as part of the expert review process, inviting early career researchers to be especially active and present within these important science-policy engagements.



A declaration to work together for the Hindu Kush Himalayan region

Ministers from all eight of the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan – signed an historic declaration to deepen regional cooperation for climate action. The 15 October 2020 HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit organized by the ICIMOD Board of Governors welcomed the HKH Call to Action, which outlines six urgent actions: strengthening regional cooperation to improve mountain livelihoods and to sustain the HKH as a regional and global asset; recognize and prioritize the uniqueness of the HKH mountain people; take concerted climate action; take accelerated actions to achieve the SDGs in the HKH; take decisive action to enhance ecosystem resilience; and promote regional data and information sharing and develop actionable knowledge that is mountain-focused and HKH-specific.

Top: Group photo from HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit
©ICIMOD

Right:
The Interparliamentary Assembly of Member States of the CIS meets virtually
©Press Service of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation



“We can turn around climate change and bounce back better if governments work together towards green, resilient and inclusive recovery and take concerted action together.”

Eklabya Sharma, ICIMOD

Legislation for sustainable development in the Commonwealth of Independent States region

A model law for the social and economic development of mountain regions was adopted by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in a move that is expected to pave the way for further national legislation to address the sustainable management of mountain areas. The new model law covers state regulation of natural resources and environmental protection, as well as outmigration, unemployment, poverty and inequality in mountain areas. Also included are strategies to protect traditional ways of life and measures to prevent natural hazards and emergencies.



Committing to mountain people and environments in Argentina

The Committee for the Sustainable Development of the Mountain Regions of the Argentine Republic (CMA) remained active in 2020 despite the limitations of the global pandemic. Comprising representatives from 29 national institutions, the CMA held monthly virtual meetings from April through December. It designed its 2020 agenda along three lines of work, including COVID-19, institutional strengthening, and strategic territorial planning.

The Committee monitored and evaluated the impact of the pandemic on the country's mountain regions. It developed lessons learned and fostered civic trust and cooperation. A major achievement for the Committee included the formalization of the CMA by the Government of Argentina, 15 years after its establishment in 2005. In an official resolution ratified on 1 December, the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development announced that the national mountain committee would be officially included within its scope of work.

Strategic territorial planning was carried out along four lines of activity. An agreement was signed between the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research to gather data for SDG indicator 15.4.2, the Mountain Green Cover Index, and calculate Argentina's mountains' green cover. Within the framework of "National Land Monitoring and Information System for a transparent NDC reporting", over 30 CMA members participated in an online capacity-building workshop organized by FAO and facilitated by the MPS. To conserve ecosystem services, improve communities' livelihoods and improve inter-jurisdictional sustainable management, territorial environmental planning for the mountains of Argentina was developed including guidelines and strategies for coordinated public policies.





Preservation and valorization of Carpathian transhumance in Romania

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania, through the National Agency for Mountain Areas, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests, initiated and finalized the inscription process of Carpathian transhumance – part of traditional Romanian pastoral life – in the national inventory of living elements of intangible cultural heritage.

Transhumance represents a complex aggregate of knowledge and practices related to animal breeding, high altitude grazing, crafts and products of sheepfold, and pastoral community and its rituals.

The inscription of Carpathian transhumance in the national intangible cultural heritage inventory is the first step towards beginning the process to its inscription in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This will increase the valorization of the social and economic dimensions of this cultural phenomenon, as well as promote the development of measures that will ensure that it will be passed on to future generations.



Top: Pastoral life in the mountains of Romania
©Danut Ungureanu

Left: Fitz Roy in Argentina
©Colin Bell

A race to protect mountain food systems in Cameroon

The annual 38-kilometre Race of Hope to the peak of Mount Cameroon was the backdrop for an awareness-raising campaign on sustainable mountain ecosystems, mounted by the International Centre for Environmental Education and Community Development (ICENECDEV). Large banners with messages about the need to protect mountain biodiversity for food were placed along the route of the high-level sporting event in February, which attracted 500 athletes and an audience of more than 20 000 spectators. Founded in 2005, ICENECDEV works to address key environmental issues that affect livelihoods and communities in Cameroon and other African countries.

Masquerade in Mount Cameroon Forest Region, Cameroon
©Kinge George



Youth takes the lead in mountains

Youth are the future custodians of mountains, so including them in the conversation is an important part of the MP's strategy. Giving the lead to young people to be effective change-makers in their communities through education,

training and other capacity-building activities is a key pillar of the MP's approach. So, too, are efforts to tap into young people's activism in advocating for mountains and mountain communities.

Social media and other communication channels offer opportunities to widen the network of youth interested in mountains and innovative ways of preserving mountains, and the hashtag #MountainsMatter is helping to increase awareness of the importance of mountains worldwide. United by their common objective of protecting mountain environments for the future, young people in various MP member countries worked hard in 2020 to advance sustainable development in their mountain communities and advocate for greater focus on mountain issues.

Two girls taking embroidery lessons in Barskoon, Kyrgyzstan
©FAO/Mirbek Kadralliev





Boy in Cusco, Peru
©Ben Ostrower/Unsplash

Two children in front of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand, India
©Amit Sah

Young people speak out for mountains

Seven youth mountain champions from around the world shared their ideas and solutions for sustainable mountain development and biodiversity conservation in a web dialogue, “Sparking Change in Mountain Biodiversity through Youth”. In the lead-up to International Mountain Day (IMD) 2020. The young participants spoke of their experiences in areas that included sustainable tourism and livelihoods, mountain wildlife, biodiversity, forestry and water research, photography and filmmaking, and mountain sports and eco-activism. Closing the session, Pradeep Mehta, Chairman of CHINAR, observed, “The future of mountains is in the hands of mountain youth.”

“The future of mountains is in the hands of mountain youth.”

Pradeep Mehta, Chairman of CHINAR





The Zero Water Day Partnership

The MPS has joined forces with the Zero Water Day Partnership (ZWDP) and UNESCO to increase awareness among young people of the important role played by mountains in supplying clean and abundant water. Launched via a webinar in November, ZWDP is a voluntary partnership of schools in 14 countries around the world that have come together to learn and take action on water and sustainable development in their communities. Focusing on mountains as the world's water towers, the partnership promotes the #MountainsMatter campaign in schools, mobilizing young people to become engaged in protecting mountain ecosystems for future generations.

A waterfall in Ecuador
©Ramsés Verdugo



A photograph of a tea garden in Assam, India. A person wearing a pink headscarf is visible in the lower left, working in the tea bushes. The background shows lush green trees and foliage.

Balipara Foundation connects youth with nature

Nature-based education was on the curriculum for hundreds of children in 2020 as the Balipara Foundation stepped up its programme to prepare local youth in eastern Himalayan communities to become the stewards of their natural assets. Presenting at a two-day workshop in India's Assam Valley School, the foundation helped children to learn about sustainability, community conservation, waste management and environmental activism through various hands-on activities. In another youth awareness initiative staged at the Balipara Foundation's Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ School, 23 students from the State of Assam participated in a workshop to learn bird identification techniques and the importance of bird conservation.

Left: Tea garden in Assam, India
©Amit Ranjan/Unsplash

Top right: Indian Himalayas
©Pradeep Mehta



A summit for youth in the Indian Himalayan Region

The themes discussed by young people from across the Indian Himalayan states at the third Indian Himalayan Youth Summit were: skills and entrepreneurship; sustainable resource management; migration, politics and policy; and the SDGs and sustainable tourism. Addressing these issues from a mountain perspective, the youth participants shared their concerns and suggestions at the event, which was facilitated by the MP member the Integrated Mountain Initiative. The summit set out to develop a shared understanding among youth of sustainable development in the Himalayas, identify the challenges and aspirations of young people from mountain states, and shape recommendations for the development of the Indian Himalayan Region.



Engaging youth in Rwanda's mountains through education

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) is building the capacities of students, parents and teachers in Rwanda to enhance climate resilience in schools and their surrounding communities. This is part of a four-year project under the Eco-Schools Programme, which ARCOS has been implementing in Rwanda since January 2020 in collaboration with the Danish Outdoor Council and several partners in

Rwanda, with funding from Civil Society in Development and the Civil Society Development Fund (CISU) of the Danish Government. The Programme's overall goal is to promote active citizenship and improved livelihoods for sustainable development through education by infusing environmental education, action-based learning and student-centred teaching methods into primary and secondary education.

“The Rural Youth Hub encourages youth, entrepreneurs and farmers to participate in rural development.”

Left: Students of ARCOS' Eco-Schools Programme in Rwanda
©ARCOS

Bottom: International Mountain Day in Albania
©ANRD Rural Youth Hub

Albanian Rural Youth Hub celebrates one year

The Albanian Network for Rural Development with support from the Albanian Alps Alliance and Institute for Democracy and Mediation launched the Rural Youth Hub in 2019 to encourage motivated rural youth, entrepreneurs and farmers to participate in rural development. One year later, on International Mountain Day, the Hub celebrated its first anniversary with an event held at Preza Castle in Tirana, Albania to present local good practices for touristic guides. The event targeted youth and aimed to strengthen their ability to be drivers of change in local development processes.



Improving mountain economies through business development

The Mountain Partnership Products (MPP) Initiative scaled up impact in 2020 despite the pandemic, providing tangible support to thousands of mountain producers, many of them women. The scheme, currently operating in Bolivia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Panama, Peru and the Philippines, promotes improvement of value chains of mountain products and services such as organic food, textiles and tourism services. In so doing, it helps to build stronger rural communities and economies, while safeguarding traditional knowledge and protecting biodiversity. To date, around 10 000 farmers – 6 000 of whom women – have benefited from technical and marketing support, and the labelling scheme has helped some mountain producers to increase their selling price up to 25 percent.

Producers selected for inclusion in the Initiative receive capacity development for production techniques and product development, as well as training in entrepreneurship and marketing. Each MPP product receives a narrative label that tells that

product's story, enabling consumers to make informed purchases based on its origins and cultivation, processing and preservation methods, together with its nutritional value and role in local cultures. Many beneficiaries see both production and sales increase as a result, with new market opportunities for indigenous crop varieties helping to ensure the preservation of mountain agrobiodiversity.

In September, a new partnership aimed at enhancing agrifood value chains to increase the resilience of mountain communities was officially launched. Involving the MPS, the United Nations Development Programme Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (SGP), and Slow Food International (SFI), the partnership offers a mix of financial and technical support to mountain products. The SGP grants will be awarded to selected projects for products produced and processed in mountains, while the MPS and SFI's support on product certification, marketing and labelling will be offered. Projects focusing on women, youth or indigenous peoples will be prioritized, and the first call for proposals targets Guatemala, Lesotho, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Rwanda.

Right: Women in Barskoon, Kyrgyzstan working on a skirt

©FAO/Mirbek Kadralliev





Webinar helps to overcome marketing barriers

Building on recent efforts to ramp up links with the private sector, the MPS teamed up with Italian organic retailer and distributor EcorNaturaSi to run interactive webinars in English and Spanish aimed at helping mountain producers to access new markets. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, which has aggravated challenges facing small-scale mountain agribusinesses, the session connected partners of the MPP Initiative with EcorNaturaSi's agricultural marketing expert Carlo Murer. He underscored the importance of pursuing a long-term strategy and continuing to sell products at a fair price. Murer furthermore gave practical support by supplying a list of consumers' and producers' networks.



MPS hosts webinar with IFOAM - Organics International

©MPS Photo

Participatory Guarantee Systems: A low-cost certification solution for mountain farming systems

As an alternative to expensive and complex certification schemes, the partners of the MPP Initiative, with the technical assistance of the MPS, developed the first Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Network for mountain farming systems. Locally focused PGS quality assurance systems certify producers based on an interactive, community-based approach. Building on its early experience, the MP increased PGS training and farmer interaction during 2020, helping mountain farmers to improve their practices and learn from each other.

In Kyrgyzstan, a PGS training benefited 17 members of the Dyikan Muras Seed-Savers Network, a small-scale

group of women growing locally adapted, non-hybrid and non-genetically modified vegetable seeds. In a move expected to lead to a rise in PGS training and certification in the Philippines, the Government approved a bill recognizing PGSSs, amending the country's legal framework for organic agriculture. In Nepal, an eco-social company Organic World and Fair Future stepped up momentum for a successful PGS, facilitating the launch of five PGS groups in the country. In collaboration with IFOAM - Organics International, the MPS supported three members – Fundación Pasos in Bolivia, Fundación CoMunidad in Panama, and Red de Agroindustria Rural del Perú (REDAR) in Peru – in implementing a PGS initiative in their local contexts.

Tibetan yaks in the mountains
©Yuka Makino





Linking sustainable food systems and tourism destinations

Sustainable agrifood products combined with sustainable tourism offer a pathway for the conservation of fragile ecosystems, such as mountains and islands. These two landscapes are the focus of the Coalition of Fragile Ecosystems (COFE), a global alliance founded by the MP and the Global Island Partnership for the protection of mountain and island ecosystems. By 2030, COFE aims to create an international network of sustainable tourism destinations with sustainable food systems at their heart.

As part of the COFE initiative, the Republic of Palau, an archipelago of 300 volcanic islands in Micronesia, has been selected for a programme aimed at sustainable

production and empowering rural women producers in the tourism value chain. To reduce the carbon footprint of tourism in Palau, the Palau Sustainable Tourism Value Chain Programme is developing a carbon management programme for tourists, and aims to increase the proportion of food sourced from local producers and reduce the industry's dependence on imports. The strategy will connect small-scale producers with tourism service providers, promote high-quality mountain products, and allow visitors to support unique biodiversity while safeguarding local foods and ensuring that traditional farming practices are not abandoned.

Mountain communities share experiences at Terra Madre

Members of the MPP Initiative showcased their traditions in a session at the 2020 Terra Madre Salone del Gusto, which is dedicated to good, clean and fair food. The Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation in India and the Indigenous Terra Madre Network in the Philippines were both featured at the session, which was moderated by the MPS. Terra Madre is organized by Slow Food, a member of the MP and a partner of the MPP Initiative.

Blueberry jam from Peru with Mountain Partnership

Product narrative label

©Michelle Geringer

Mountain Partnership Products selected for Expo Dubai 2021

The Mountain Partnership Products (MPP) Initiative was selected as one of 25 best practices out of 1 175 submitted worldwide to be featured at the Expo Dubai, which was postponed due to COVID-19. An exhibition featuring mountain products and a conference on sustainable mountain development will be now showcased in 2021. However, an online pre-programme presentation held in October 2020 outlined some of the MPP Initiative's achievements.

Innovations from mountain communities

Building forward better in mountains means recognizing them as hotspots for developing innovative solutions that can build economic opportunities and improve resilience. From circular economy approaches to local governance mechanisms and partnerships with the private sector, there are plenty of opportunities for sustainable growth.

Together with partners from a wide range of countries and backgrounds, in 2020 the MP continued its mission to encourage and promote novel ways of helping small business enterprises to develop sustainable agricultural value chains, using tourism, technology and networking as drivers of sustainable development, and raising awareness of mountain issues through cultural heritage and environmental activism.



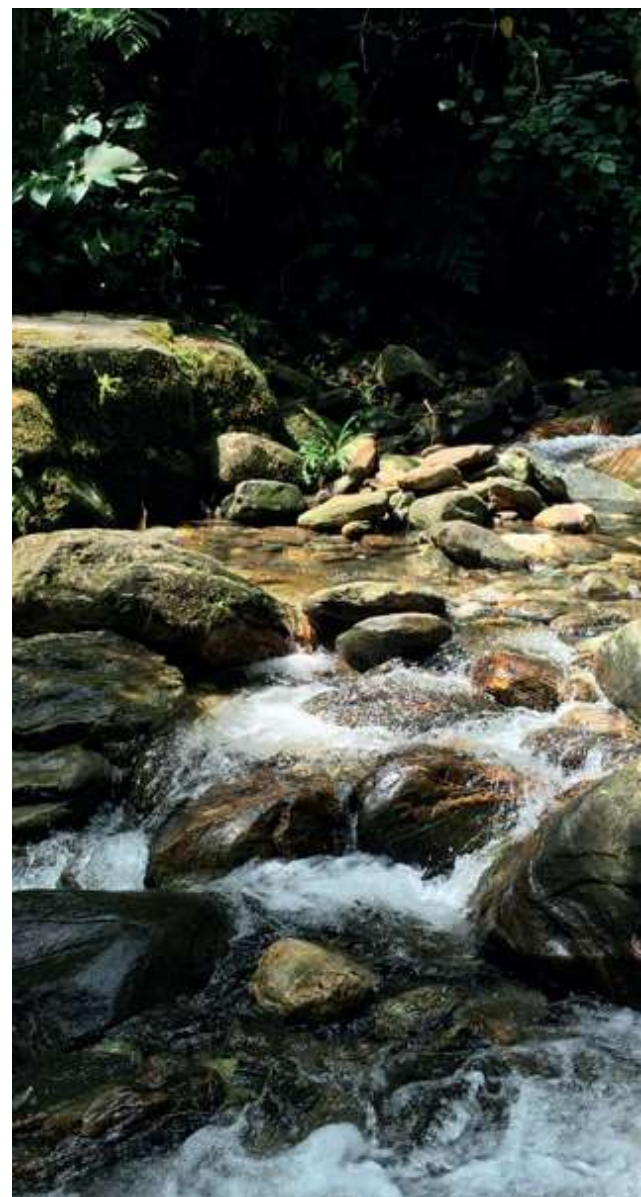
Telescope installed for astro-tourism
©Global Himalayan Expedition

Bolstering resilience to climate change in mountain watersheds

As custodians of land, farmers are the first to be affected by climate change and the degradation of natural resources, and have a vested interest in adopting sustainable agricultural practices. An innovative project funded by the Government of Japan aims to enhance capacities in a risk-based watershed management approach while developing sustainable agricultural value chains to improve local livelihoods.

Activities for the “Enhancing community resilience to climate change in mountain watersheds” project will be implemented in Peru and the Philippines, with lessons learned disseminated to other mountain settings. As of 2017, more than 3 million mountain people were vulnerable to food insecurity in the Philippines and over 2.2 million in Peru.

“Farmers are the first to be affected by climate change, and have a vested interest in adopting sustainable agricultural practices.”




A mountain river in Colombia
©Sara J. Casallas Ramirez

Innovation contest winners at GROW Summer School

A mobile app for data collection and value chain development focusing on PGS and agrobiodiversity won the inaugural Innovation Contest at the annual Summer School on Agrobiodiversity in a Changing Climate (GROW). “The Umlimi app has been designed and developed to connect and showcase the power of organic production and PGS,” said Matthew Purkis from South Africa, who earned a EUR 1 000 prize and technical assistance to develop his app. Carolina Zamorano-Montañez won the Audience Award for her proposal on weeds as soil cover in small banana and plantain crops in Colombia. As part of the prize, she is receiving technical support to kick-start her idea.

Matthew Purkis, winner of the 2020 GROW Innovation Contest



A top-down view of a purple ceramic bowl filled with a thick, reddish-brown soup. The soup is garnished with a large pile of fresh green herbs, including cilantro and green onions. To the right, a portion of a dark blue lid with a textured pattern is visible. The bowl sits on a red and brown striped placemat.

"Kwati" from Ashmita Lama, IMD 2019 recipe contest winner
©Pratik Tamang

Cooks in high places – a mountain recipe book

A book featuring the top 30 recipes from the International Mountain Day 2019 contest, organized by FAO and the MPS, has been published to help promote mountain products and cultural traditions. *Cooks in high places – Mountain specialties* contains some of the 70 entries received from 27 countries, using traditional local methods and ingredients, which range from potatoes to cheese and from quinoa to mushrooms. Each recipe has a short introduction, explaining the story behind the dish. Competition winner Ashmita Lama gives her recipe for Jumla beans. Grown in Nepal's Sinja Valley, the beans now carry the MPP label.

Research on European mountain areas

The Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research (BAB) of Austria conducts research on mountains and sustainable mountain development. In 2020, BAB was a partner in several mountain-related projects, including “European Shrinking Rural Areas: Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance,” “Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development In European Rural And Mountain Areas”, and “The challenge in land abandonment after 2020 and options for mitigating measures.”

The BAB provided expert input and consultation on the project, “Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia” and participated in the European conference, “Mountain areas of large Mediterranean islands: European issues, national and regional policies, and local mechanisms”. It furthermore contributed to the activities of the Network for European Mountain Research and produced several publications.

Right: Pirin National Park, Bulgaria
©Maria Teneva/ Unsplash

Next page (bottom):
Inauguration of the Living Chapel installation in Rome
©Antonella Di Girolamo



Nepali tree garden joins the global Living Chapel network

Mountain Partnership friends in the mountain village of Toplang, Nepal joined the worldwide Living Chapel movement in September by planting a variety of trees at a local primary school. Community members with the support of Organic World and Fair Future Pvt. Ltd. came together to plant 16 trees from eight varieties, including the Buddha Chitta, a species endemic to Nepal, as well as the curry tree and the purple-flowered jacaranda tree. The Toplang tree garden is one of the latest additions to the global network of Living Chapel gardens,

planted by schools, communities and governments with the aim of fostering biodiversity, restoring forgotten and overlooked species, and nurturing richly diverse ecosystems. Additionally, in June, a vertical Living Chapel garden installation was unveiled at Sapienza University of Rome's Botanical Garden during an event moderated by the MPS. The work was supported by FAO, the MP and UNEP, among others.

Tree planting in Toplang, Nepal
©Umesh Lama



Networking for mountain sustainability

Networking connectivity, applications and eco-social processes are key to achieving the SDGs. “Networking for Mountain Sustainability”, a project of the Telluride Institute and Aspen International Mountain Foundation in collaboration with the Mountain Resilience Coalition, is preparing a report and initiative to provide a rapid assessment, resource guide and recommendations for the MP’s next phase (2021–2025) of networking for mountain communications.

The project aims to aid research, decision-making, planning, partnerships, investments and on-the-ground actions. It also aims to show how comprehensive, in-depth, networked, self-determination strategies can be critical in leading to more empowered and resilient mountain communities.



“Networking connectivity, applications and ecosocial processes are key to achieving the SDGs.”



A pathway to smart mountain tourism

The Alagna Walser Green Paradise aims to highlight the role that a community can play in balancing high levels of tourism with principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability. The slow tourism project is funded by the Italian Piedmont region and supported by the municipality of Alagna in the heart of the Monte Rosa massif. Designed by the University of Turin's Department of Management, the project looks at issues considered by the European Union to be crucial to defining smart tourism offers, including cultural heritage and creativity, sustainability, accessibility and digitalization. It includes awareness-raising activities for stakeholders and aims to design and implement an Integrated Tourism Management System. The project began in December 2020 and will last two years.

Previous page: Technology in mountains

©Spencer Backman/Unsplash

Left: Italian Dolomites

© Marco Salaris

Partnerships – the alliance’s greatest asset

The year 2020 saw a drive to build on new relationships with a wide variety of partners, serving mountain communities and agendas around the world. In many cases, partners have been selected with the aim of strengthening links in the priority MP areas of mountain agriculture and livelihoods improvement.

The MPS teamed up with Italian organic retail and distribution company EcorNaturaSi to advance the fair trade of unique, organic products and conserve biodiversity in mountain environments. In an agreement signed in July, both parties pledged to improve value chains and access to markets for small-scale producers, advocate for the conservation of biodiversity, reduce food loss and waste, and promote animal welfare. Other features of the partnership include efforts to create job opportunities in rural areas, provide training and capacity development in developing agribusinesses, and strengthen producers’ organizations and cooperatives, including for youth,

women and indigenous peoples. EcorNaturaSi is already working as a partner in the MPP Initiative, providing advice on identifying quality, marketable products and the mountain PGS for organic certification.

A new partnership to foster innovation and entrepreneurship was launched between FAO and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in September. The collaboration will also contribute to support COFE on income diversification opportunities and to strengthen livelihoods, with a focus on youth and women. Projects between the MPS and the UNWTO include a forthcoming publication on mountain tourism.

In late 2020, the MPS partnered with the Haitian-Italian fashion designer Stella Jean to start a collaboration with the Kyrgyz women producers’ group Topchu. In the mountainous Issyk-Kul Region of Kyrgyzstan, Topchu creates carpets, wall hangings and silk scarves adorned with traditional feltwork, a craft that has been handed down through generations. Inspired by the women’s artifacts, Jean worked online





during a COVID-19 lockdown with a local designer based in Bishkek to create a fashion collection featuring traditional Kyrgyz embroidery in feltwork for Milan Fashion Week 2021.

The Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability of the Principality of Andorra, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture and FAO continued offering strategic and financial support to the Secretariat in 2020. Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is supporting sustainable agricultural value chains through the MPP Initiative.



Top: Bedini Bugyal, a Himalayan Alpine meadow in India
© Amit Sah

Bottom: UNWTO and FAO sign a Memorandum of Understanding
©FAO/Giulio Napolitano



Ranchers in the páramos of Rumipata, Tungurahua, Ecuador
©CONDESAN/Ana Carolina Benítez

Learning and training opportunities on mountain management

A major shift in MPS capacity-building activities took place in 2020 due to COVID-19 and restrictions to contain it, with many training and other initiatives moved online. This proved a challenge but also an opportunity, often enabling larger numbers of people to connect in a virtual setting and to benefit from the knowledge of experts made available on a wide range of subjects linked to sustainable mountain development.

GROW goes virtual

Held online this year, 30 young professionals from 18 countries were selected to participate in the third annual edition of the GROW Summer School. The course helps students to understand the importance

of mountain agrobiodiversity, which plays a critical role in enhancing the resilience and adaptability of farming systems to climate change, and as a marketing tool for agrifoods produced there. With lectures from NaturaSi, IFOAM - Organics International and Slow Food, this third annual summer school introduced skills that will have a practical application for students back home. Participant Rommila Chandra from India said, "GROW helped me understand adaptation mechanisms at local and regional levels for the exploration of livelihood opportunities through agrobiodiversity conservation and diversification."

The summer school was organized by the MPS, in collaboration with Sapienza University of Rome and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture. Technical support was provided by FAO. Sponsors and partners of the summer school included the Italian Development Cooperation, NaturaSi, Slow Food and IFOAM - Organics International and the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research.

IPROMO explores mountains and climate change

“Mountains in a changing climate: Threats, challenges and opportunities” was the theme of the thirteenth annual IPROMO training course, held online in October for 38 participants from 21 countries. This year’s course was designed as a follow-up to the 2012 theme, “Understanding and adapting to climate change in mountain areas”. Specifically, it investigated the extent to which mountain communities have changed their strategies for addressing climate change impacts. Other issues explored – always from a climate change perspective – included environmental conservation, watershed management, mountain forests, soils and biodiversity, poverty reduction, food security and sustainable tourism.

Training in a tool to measure land- use changes

An online capacity-building workshop organized by FAO introduced more than 30 members of the National Committee for the Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions of Argentina to Collect Earth, a data collection tool for the assessment of land-use changes. Participants were shown the value of the technology as a policy tool, before being given technical training in its practical use. This can include reporting on the SDGs – particularly in relation to the Mountain Green Cover Index.

Next page: Sustainability workshop with the Andean Chocó
Youth Network, Chontaloma Reserve, Pacto, Ecuador
©CONDESAN/Ana Carolina Benítez

Piedmont forests at Mashpi, Pacto, Ecuador
©CONDESAN/Ana Carolina Benítez



Building capacities in the Andes



CONDESAN prioritized activities in 2020 that could be developed through remote means, emphasizing knowledge generation, capacity-building processes, environmental education and political science dialogues.

Through its various projects, CONDESAN supported the strengthening of capacities of around 500 public and private sectors professionals on sustainable mountain development, at local, sub-national and national levels.

Training was provided to 200 teachers and educational administrators on the sustainability processes in the mountain forests of the Chocó Andino in Ecuador. Prior to the arrival of COVID-19, a field school on agriculture and livestock was conducted in the parishes of Cuyuja and Papallacta, Ecuador, to provide producers with basic knowledge on the care and management of their animals and on how to manage resources in a sustainable, climate-resilient manner.

In Bolivia, a course was given to decision makers on the delimitation and implementation of safety strips in rivers in the Cochabamba Region, and in Peru, the first training workshop on “Investment Opportunities in Natural Infrastructure” was organized, which aimed to train and provide guidance to participants in the identification, formulation and programming of investments related to ecosystem projects.

At the regional level, the first edition of the virtual course on sustainable land management (SLM) in the Andes, developed collaboratively between CONDESAN and the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar - Ecuador Headquarters, was successfully carried out. The course addressed the concepts and tools for implementing SLM practices, taking into account ecosystem- and landscape-based approaches that promote sustainable development and resilience in the face of changes.

Weaving Blackfoot and “Western” scientific knowledge systems to improve ecosystem resilience

The Resilience Institute and the Kainai First Nation collaborated on the “Restoration of Kainai Native Grasslands” initiative in 2020. Activities included removing invasive plants and restoring highly diverse native and traditional plants. Restoration of native grasslands at the base of the Canadian Rocky Mountains builds climate resilience by addressing cultural and ecological vulnerabilities in the ecosystem, such as changing fire regimes, invasive species and overgrazing. The initiative included a series of workshops, community events, seed collection trainings, the creation of a database on traditional plants, and skill-building for control of invasive species. An important component of this initiative was the involvement of elders and other knowledge holders who advised and guided the project’s activities.

Moraine Lake, Canada
©Phoebe Huang



Communicating the mountain story

Telling the stories of MP members and their activities, and ensuring that these are shared as widely as possible, is a core part of the MPS' work. Experience has shown that exchanging knowledge about challenges faced by mountain communities, and the many best practices developed in overcoming them, can help to inspire others facing similar situations and galvanize them into action.

This year saw a focus on building a body of success stories about mountain producers, showcasing how mountain people's lives and livelihoods are being impacted by initiatives such as product development and training, many of them underpinned by the highly successful MPP Initiative. A number of these tales have been published in brochures, press releases and on websites, and several are shared in this report.



Organic bee farm in Mongolia
©Enkhtsetseg

Sweet success beckons for beekeeper in Kyrgyzstan

A partnership with the MPP Initiative is helping Damira Kampabekova to develop a thriving agribusiness based on her lifelong passion of beekeeping. On the slopes above her highland village of At-Bashy, in the Naryn region of central Kyrgyzstan, Damira spends long hours tending her hives to produce white mountain honey, as well as studying native plants, such as sainfoin.

Soft textured, with a delicate fragrance and flavour, this highly nutritious honey is certified organic through a PGS and has been granted the MPP narrative label. A trained pharmacist, she is committed to expanding her agribusiness, Dordoi Dary LLC, which already employs ten local women.

“I have ambitious plans to cultivate medicinal herbs and harvest honey from my own sainfoin fields, which will create new jobs.”

Damira Kampabekova,
Beekeeper and Mountain Partnership Product producer in Kyrgyzstan

Next page: Family farmers in Peru
©Ally Mishky

Right: White honey producer in Kyrgyzstan
©Damira Kampabekova





A golden touch for mountain superfruit

In the Peruvian highlands, Gabriel and Marina Barreto are using a time-honoured tradition to cultivate goldenberries (*Physalis peruviana*) for jam. These ancient fruits have proved an important source of income for the couple, in an area where 70 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Popular with urban consumers due to their unique flavour and multiple health benefits, goldenberries have gained a reputation as a superfood, with high levels of vitamins A and C, as well as fibre, phosphorus, iron, potassium and zinc.

The Barretos supply their goldenberries to the Rural Agroindustry Network of Peru (REDAR), which produces *Mermelada de Aguaymanto*, or goldenberry jam, under its brand *Ally Mishky*. Since 2017, REDAR has used the MPP narrative label, which describes the goldenberry jam's health properties and cultural importance. Since then, sales have increased by more than 50 percent, meaning increased revenue for the Barretos and the conservation of local agrobiodiversity.

International Mountain Day

Celebrations were held worldwide on 11 December, highlighting the riches of mountains and the diversity of mountain peoples, and advocating for the protection of mountains and sustainable development. Mountain Partnership members, environmentalists, mountaineers, celebrities and schoolchildren found safe and creative ways to mark International Mountain Day with over 70 events in 28 countries.

“Mountain biodiversity matters” was the theme of International Mountain Day 2020, which celebrated the rich biodiversity found in mountains while raising awareness about the threats it faces and the solutions for halting biodiversity loss and improving livelihoods in mountains.

A virtual celebration by FAO and the Mountain Partnership, “Mountain Biodiversity Matters”, held on 11 December focused on solutions for halting biodiversity loss and improving livelihoods in mountains. With opening remarks by FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo, the event included a high-level session with sustainable mountain development leaders, a roundtable on accelerating action for mountains, and a section with the MP Goodwill Ambassadors, including mountaineer and explorer Reinhold Messner, pianist and composer Ludovico Einaudi, and His Holiness Drikung Kyabgön Chetsang.

Einaudi and fellow ambassador, climber and filmmaker Jake Norton, meanwhile released a video during the celebration using a track gifted to the MP by Einaudi. The video shows the beauty and fragility of mountain ecosystems and their biodiversity, and the richness and diversity of peoples who rely on mountains and call them home.



Ludovico Einaudi performs on IMD

©MPS Photo



International Mountain Day 2020 - FAO/MPS event, 11 December
©MPS photo

“Mountains and their biodiversity provide food and medicine, as well as climate, water, soil, and air quality regulation to humankind.”

IMD key message

Nepalese athlete is new MP Goodwill Ambassador

Meet Mira Rai, the Nepalese trail runner who was appointed a MP Goodwill Ambassador during the International Mountain Day virtual celebration. Winner of the 2017 National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, she is also founder of the Mira Rai Initiative, a platform to empower female trail runners in Nepal, and an inspirational advocate for gender equality. Passionate about mountains, this athlete is committed to ensuring their preservation. "Mountains have always played a major role in my trail running journey," she said. "However, they play a key role in our entire global system. Without these beautiful mountains and their environment, there would simply be no life."

Mira Rai, new MP Goodwill Ambassador
©Richard Bull



Winning photos capture mountain biodiversity

More than 500 photographs of mountain landscapes, plants and animals were received from 55 countries as entries for the International Mountain Day 2020 photo contest. With the theme of mountain biodiversity, the contest had three age categories, with a prize of an action camera awarded in each case.

A panel of FAO judges selected the following winners: Tar Agrawal from India won the children's category with her photo, "Peaceful Claws"; Jaime Venegas from Ecuador won the youth's category with his photo, "Esperanza" (Hope); and Troise Carmine-Washi from Italy won the adults' category with his photo, "Fox Sister".



Winner, adult category, IMD Photo Contest 2020:

"Fox Sister", Italy

©Troise Carmine – Washi

Tales of Mountain Biodiversity

An initiative aimed at sharing stories to highlight the wide diversity of species that live in the world's mountains drew entries from around the world. Launched by the MPS and the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, Tales of Mountain Biodiversity attracted more than 40 stories, which were published on the Mountain Partnership website. One, written by Luis Miguel Cabello Barturen from Peru, tells the tale of the Rímac River and the spirits protecting it. Another, submitted by Long Ruijun, Sun Tao and Shang Zhanhuan, describes an innovative pilot in China's Qilian Mountains that uses chickens to control grasshopper populations and produce high-quality organic chicken meat to improve local livelihoods.

Top left:
Man walking along river to reach Ladakh, India
©Dorjay Angdus

Below: Drawing of Andean condor
©Marie Aniere Martinez

Monitoring carbon footprints and celebrating progress

The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) promoted a series of initiatives on and ahead of International Mountain Day. Following the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission's decision to postpone the 2020 Mountain Protection Award to 2021 owing to COVID-19, the UIAA decided instead to focus on profiling the progress



made by past recipients of the Award. The UIAA also published its second annual Carbon Footprint Report, as part of its commitment to monitor and review its carbon footprint under the the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Sports for Climate Action, to tackle climate change and reduce its own CO₂ emissions.



Mountain Partnership by numbers

#MountainsMatter Hashtag

In 2020, over **6 700** tweets with the hashtag #MountainsMatter were delivered to more than **63 million** Twitter timelines. On International Mountain Day alone, FAO's social media content on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn was picked up and mentioned more than **1 200** times with a reach of **65 million**, while two FAO TikTok videos on mountains received over **39 000** views.

MP Twitter

160 752 total impressions in 2020
450 average daily impressions

1 060 followers in Jan 2020
1 450 followers in Jan 2021 | **36 % increase**

7 400 total impressions on IMD

MP Facebook

6 340 followers in Jan 2020
7 630 followers in Jan 2021 | **21 % increase**

671 average daily reach

6 113 total reach on IMD 2019
60 794 total reach on IMD 2020 | **895 % increase**

MP Website

34 475 total users in 2019
41 100 total users in 2020 | **20 % increase**

479 total users on IMD 2019
1 200 total users on IMD 2020 | **150 % increase**

Most visited pages:
Homepage, Climate Change, MP Members

IMD Website

23 392 total users in 2019
23 800 total users in 2020 | **2 % increase**

3 977 total users on IMD 2019
5 436 total users on IMD 2020 | **37 % increase**

Most visited pages:
Homepage, Photo Contest, Information Material

Instagram

480 followers in Jan 2020
970 followers in Jan 2021 | **95 % increase**

42 000 total impressions in 2019
50 000 total impressions in 2020 | **20 % increase**

3 400 impressions on IMD 2020



Advocacy for mountains

“Mountain areas of large Mediterranean islands: European issues, National and Regional policies and local mechanisms” conference (Platres & Omodos, Cyprus; 28–31 January)

Informal Mountain Gathering at the Second Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Rome, Italy; 25 February)

Mountain Partnership Steering Committee meeting (Virtual; 25 June & 13 July)

Side Event at High-level Political Forum (Virtual; 9 July)

Mountain Partnership Products Initiative webinar, “Overcoming marketing barriers of COVID-19”, in English and Spanish (Virtual; 21 & 23 July)

GROW Agrobiodiversity in a Changing Climate Summer School (Virtual; 15–25 September)

Launch of the UNDP GEF SGP - FAO MPS - SFI joint initiative, “Enhancing agri-food value chains to increase resilience of mountain communities” (Virtual; 21 September)

Climate Week NYC side event (Virtual; 22 September)

IPROMO Summer School: Mountains in a Changing Climate (Virtual; 28 September – 9 October)

Origin, Diversity and Territories Forum (Virtual; 7 October)

Terra Madre Salone del Gusto (Virtual; 11 October)

Sparkling Change in Mountain Biodiversity through Youth (Virtual; 19 October)

Climate and Biodiversity Week – Pre-Expo Dubai Series (Virtual; 21 October)

Mountain Partnership Steering Committee meeting (Virtual; 17 November)

International Mountain Day 2020 – Mountain Biodiversity Matters (Virtual; 11 December)

Left: Mealtime inside a traditional Kyrgyz yurt
©FAO/Mirbek Kadraliev

2020 content highlights

Publications

MPS Annual Report 2019 (English)

FAO Assists in Enhancing the Resilience of Mountain Communities and Environments (English), Mountain Research and Development

Mountain Recipes: Cooks in High Places (English), FAO

FAO press release: EcorNaturaSí and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat to boost the livelihoods of mountain and island communities (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish)

IMD Editorial 2020 (English, Italian, Spanish) – published in 20+ international news outlets

FAO press release: Mountain people among the world's hungriest as biodiversity loss and climate change take their toll (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish)

Vulnerability of mountain peoples to food insecurity: updated data and analysis of drivers (English), FAO

Mountain Biodiversity Matters fact sheet 2020 (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish), FAO

Mountain biodiversity children's activities – word search and colouring pages (English)



Annual Report 2019
©FAO/MPS-2020



Vulnerability of mountain people to food insecurity: updated data and analysis of drivers
©FAO/MPS-2020



Mountain recipes: Cooks in high places
©FAO/MPS-2020

Videos

Azienda Agricola Boccea Video for 2020 GROW Summer School (Italian with English subtitles)

International Mountain Day 2020 – Sparking Change in Mountain Biodiversity through Youth event recording (English)

International Mountain Day 2020 photo contest video (English)

International Mountain Day 2020 video message by FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu (English)

GROW Summer School 2020 promotional video (English)

Mountain Partnership Goodwill Ambassadors video collaboration (English) by Jake Norton with music by Ludovico Einaudi

IMD fact sheet 2020
©FAO/MPS-2020

Tales of Mountain Biodiversity
©MPS Photo



The Mountain Partnership Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the Mountain Partnership provides programmatic orientation to the MP, overseeing the preparation of a four-year strategy and a two-year work plan. The 17-member body monitors the work of the MPS, the implementation of the “Mountain Agenda” and the achievements and impacts of their respective electoral groups.

Steering Committee members are elected to four-year terms by the various membership categories and regions. They meet annually and select a chair and vice chairs.

The following governments and organizations are serving on the 2017–2020 Steering Committee:

Donor Organization to the MPS

- Switzerland

Governments

- Asia and the Pacific: Philippines, Nepal (Alternate)
- Europe: Italy (Chair), Turkey (Alternate)
- Middle East and North Africa: Tunisia
- North and Central America and the Caribbean: Dominican Republic, Guatemala (Alternate)
- South America: Argentina, Chile (Alternate)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Uganda, Cameroon (Alternate)

Host Institution of the MPS

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Intergovernmental Organization

- United Nations Environment Programme, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (Alternate)





Major Group Organizations

- Asia and the Pacific: Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (Vice Chair), Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation (Alternate)
- Central Asia: Institute for Sustainable Development Strategy Public Fund, Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation (Alternate)
- Europe: Centro de Investigação de Montanha and Euromontana
- Global Civil Society Organization: Mountain Research Initiative, The Mountain Institute (Alternate)
- Middle East and North Africa: Mountain Environment Protection Society
- North and Central America and the Caribbean: Aspen International Mountain Foundation (Vice Chair), Fundación CoMunidad (Alternate)
- South America: Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion, Fundación Agreste (Alternate)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Foundation for Environment and Development, Les Compagnons Ruraux (Alternate)



Top: Mountain Partnership Steering Committee
©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Bottom: Mountain Partnership Steering Committee
©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

North & Central America and the Caribbean

6 governments:
Costa Rica / Cuba / Dominican Republic / Guatemala / Jamaica / Mexico + 32 NGOs
+ 3 subnational authorities

Middle East and North Africa

6 governments:
Algeria / Iran / Jordan / Morocco / Tunisia / Yemen + 10 NGOs

Europe

17 governments:
Andorra / Armenia / Austria / France / Georgia / Italy / Liechtenstein / Monaco / Romania / Serbia / Slovakia / Slovenia / Spain / Switzerland / Republic of North Macedonia / Turkey / Ukraine + 90 NGOs
+ 2 subnational authorities

Asia and the Pacific

10 governments:
Afghanistan / Bangladesh / Bhutan / India / Indonesia / Nepal / Pakistan / Papua New Guinea / Philippines / Sri Lanka + 71 NGOs
+ 1 subnational authority

GLOBAL

18 intergovernmental organizations

25 global major groups

South America

7 governments:
Argentina / Bolivia / Chile / Colombia / Ecuador / Peru / Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) + 33 NGOs

Sub-Saharan Africa

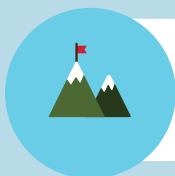
13 governments:
Burundi / Cameroon / Democratic Republic of the Congo / Ethiopia / Ghana / Guinea / Kenya / Lesotho / Madagascar / Malawi / Swaziland / Togo / Uganda + 31 NGOs
+ 1 subnational authority

Central Asia

1 government:
Kyrgyzstan + 38 NGOs
+ 1 subnational authority

Mountain Partnership members

At the end of December 2020, the following **416 governments and organizations** were members of the Mountain Partnership:



The **MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP**, founded in 2002, is the only United Nations voluntary alliance mandated to promote sustainable mountain development globally.



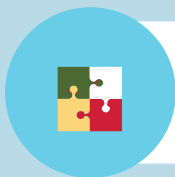
Membership: **416** - 60 governments, 18 IGOs, 305 major groups (NGOs, civil society and private sector), 25 global major groups and 8 subnational authorities.



Mandate: **IMPROVING THE LIVES** of mountain peoples and **PROTECTING MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENTS** around the world. The Secretariat is hosted by FAO.

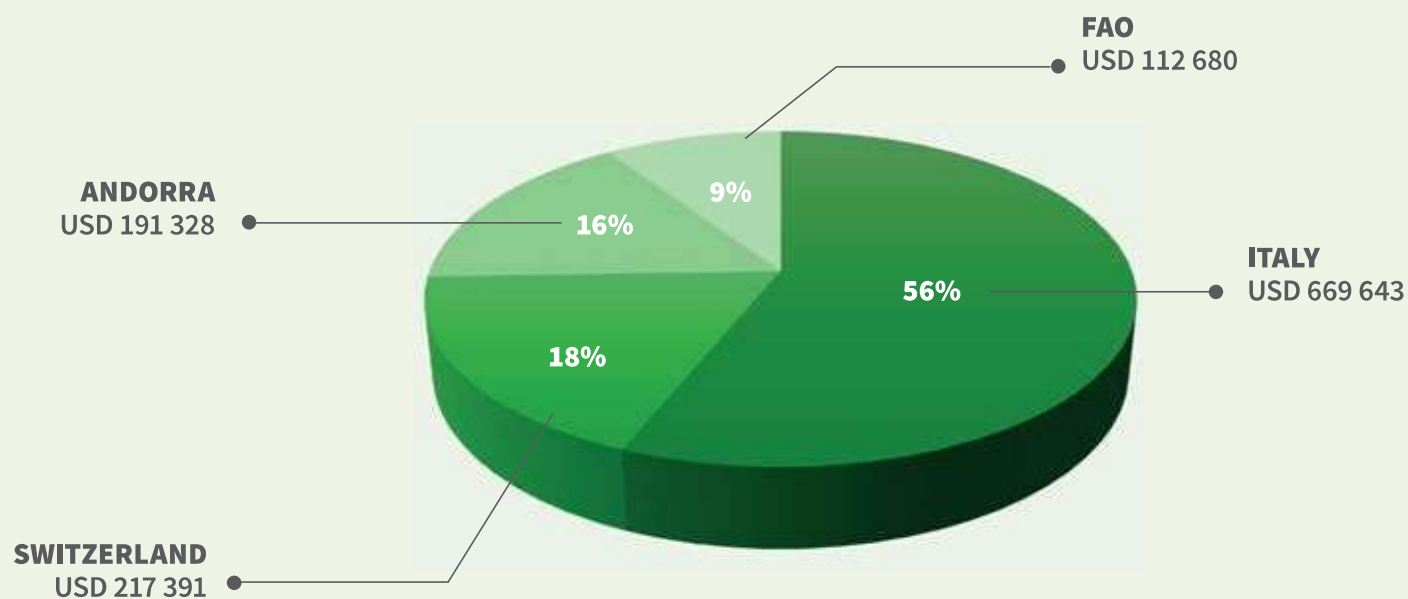


The Mountain Partnership builds on the **DIVERSITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE** of its members.



The **FOUR MAIN PILLARS** of the Mountain Partnership's work are: advocacy, joint action, capacity development and communications.

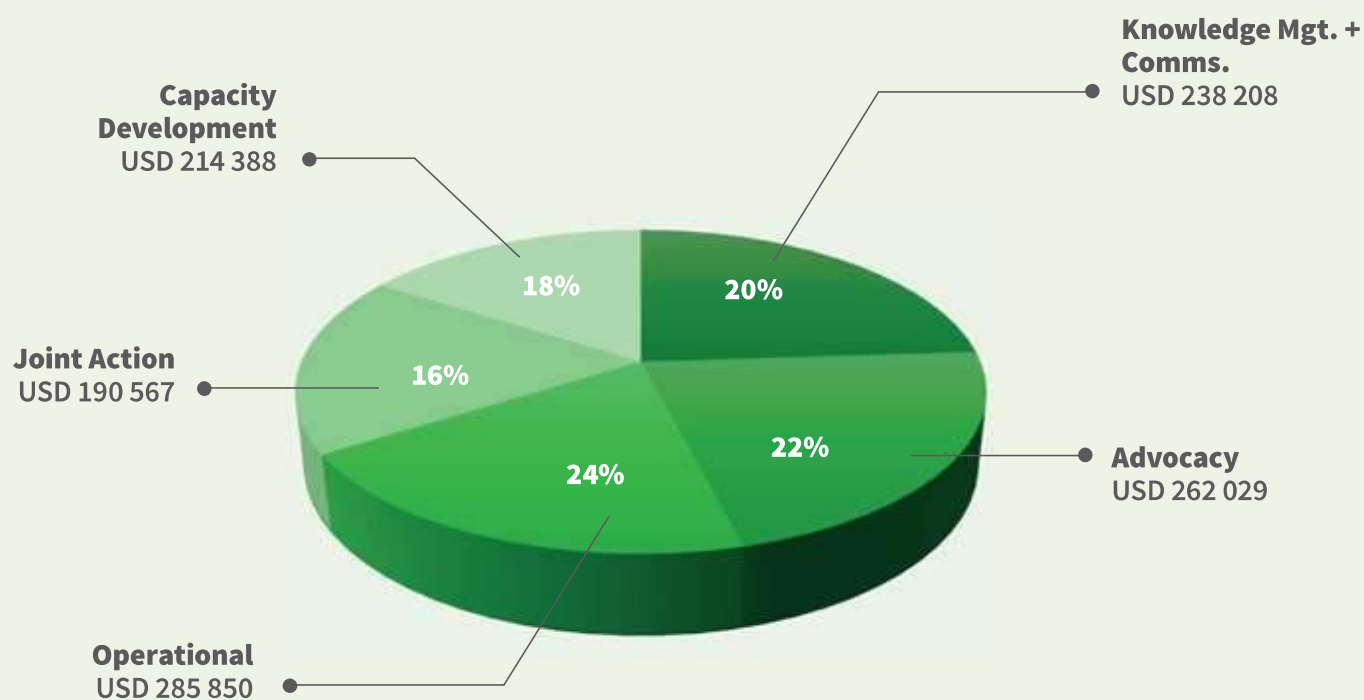
MPS financial overview



Resource partners
Italy, Switzerland,
Andorra, FAO

 **Total (100%):**
USD 1 191 042

Functions





Mountain Partnership Secretariat

The Mountain Partnership is supported by a Secretariat hosted at FAO and is supported by the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability of the Principality of Andorra, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture and FAO.

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Children in Uttarakhand, India
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**STRENGTHENING SKILLS
AND VALUE CHAINS**



**MOUNTAIN RELATED
POLICIES**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

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