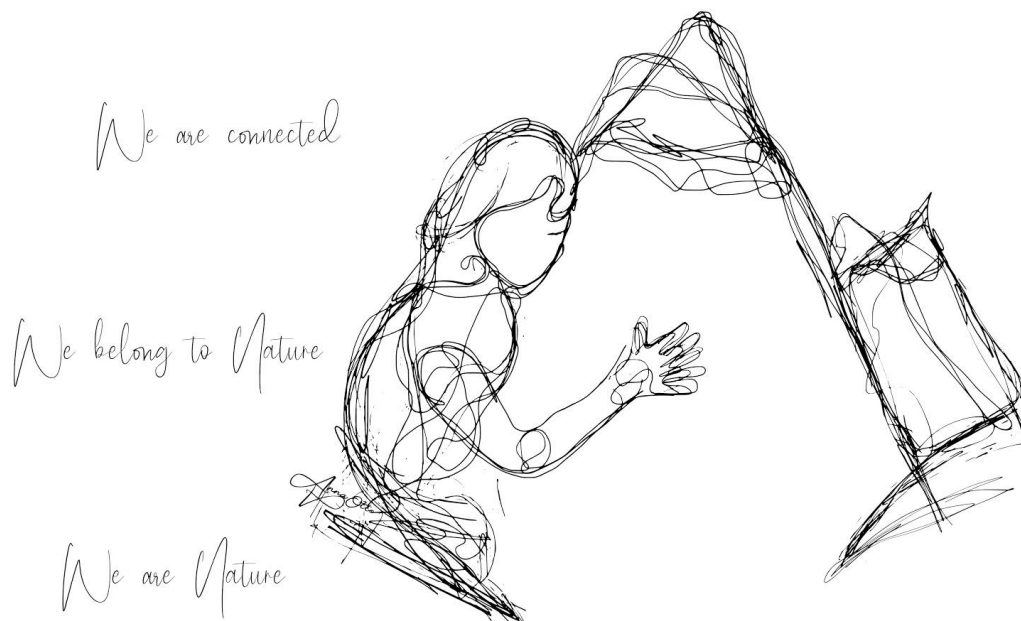


# ***We are Nature: Mountain Women Collectively Defending the Earth***

Webinar for Earth Day 22 April - 13:00 to 15:00 UTC



As part of the Mountain Women of the World project, we are hosting a Webinar for Earth Day, led from a transnational network of mountain women. This is a space for groups of mountain women from around the world to share experiences and knowledge and build collective power.

Webinar and project page: [www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org](http://www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org)

## **Agenda overview**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Panelists</b>
5 mins	<b>Introduction</b>	Welcome and overview	Co-hosts
10 mins	<b>Presentation</b>	Sharing experiences about the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir and the way that her community is protecting the mountains from extractivism, deforestation and the recent fires.	Marilyn Caño - spokesperson of the Mapuche community Lof Caño of Chubut in Argentina, and part of the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir

10 mins	<b>Presentation</b>	The experiences of Kilimanjaro Women and the Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia.	Video from Kilimanjaro Women Presentation and video from Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia
15 mins	<b>Panel 1</b>	Sharing experiences and practices for community-led mountain tourism grounded in mountain protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lucky Chhetri of 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking / Empowering Women of Nepal;</li> <li>● Lorella Franceschini of Italian Alpine Club;</li> <li>● Stephanie Carmody of Travolution.</li> </ul>
25 mins	<b>Panel 2</b>	Sharing practices to strengthen economic justice for mountain women and sharing learnings and ideas on how mountaineering builds women's collective power and collective feminist leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Elena and Giulia of Feminist Hiking Collective;</li> <li>● Dr. Bianca Elzenbaumer of Alpine Community Economies Laboratory;</li> <li>● Ada Rasulova of Topchu Art Group;</li> <li>● Rosalaura Romeo of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat.</li> </ul>
15 mins	<b>Panel 3</b>	Stories and experiences in connection with building collective healing and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Zaynah Khanbhai of South South Women;</li> <li>● Alia Dato of Women Who Hike – Africa;</li> <li>● Popi Spagnuoli and Belen Escudero of Mujeres a la Cumbre.</li> </ul>
20 mins	<b>Panel 4</b>	Sharing practices and knowledge for protecting the mountains, and sharing experiences on how mountain women are impacted by climate change and how we can strategize to create change together to defend the Earth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prof. Harshwanti Bisth of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission;</li> <li>● Dr. Carolina Adler of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission;</li> <li>● Ana Agustina Barros, alpine ecologist;</li> <li>● Alessandra Segantin, International Mountain Leader.</li> </ul>
20 mins	<b>Sharing space and Q&amp;A</b>  <b>Closing and next steps</b>	Create a safer space and a space where we can learn from our collective experiences and mountain cultures, and share a call to action to organize together for International Mountain Day.	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- we will send a follow up email – please reply to our email to keep in touch and join the <i>Mountain Women of the World</i> transnational network of mountain women, to continue this space and plan together for International Mountain Day;</li> <li>- participate in the May month of action for collective mountain protection;</li> </ul>

			- send us a poem, reflection, artwork on your connection with the mountains, to be part of a collectively authored resource we will share as one of the key outcomes of the Webinar.
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## Welcome

We want to start by welcoming everybody today and thank you for joining us. Ria and Lucy are your co-hosts today on behalf of the Mountain Women of the World (MWW) project.

Welcome everybody - we want to be a really interactive experience so please feel free to start by putting your name, country and what defending the Earth means to you in the chat and Nathalie from the MWW team will be your chat manager today.

This Webinar aims to create a safer space, where everyone feels equally valued. This is a collective space, where we foreground collective voice and power. At the same time, this space will welcome a wide range of diverse experiences, contexts and work.

By the term 'women', we mean those self-identifying with this gender. Although the focus of this Webinar is on mountain women, we want to highlight the multiple and intersecting identities that are discriminated by the patriarchal system, including non-binary gender identities.

These are the guidelines for the webinar which are as follows:

- Please put any questions in the chat so we can ask them all (or as many as possible) in the wrap-up session - you can ask them by voice too then
- If you can't hear or see please check that your microphone and video are connected or close and rejoin the webinar
- In the spirit of knowledge sharing, this event is being recorded for future access so please feel free to switch off your video if you wish and re-name yourself if you have any safety concerns but we do encourage everyone to keep their cameras on in order to create a more connected space!
- We will ask you to share some reflections on the chat throughout the webinar which we will then pool together after the webinar.
- No hate speech will be tolerated and you will be removed from the webinar if this occurs
- If you have any technical issues please post them in the chat
- We will be live posting during the webinar and please feel free to join us by tagging the project partners and speakers making sure to use the hashtags #MountainWomenoftheWorld #Wearenature #earthdayeveryday #earthday

As part of the Mountain Women of the World project, we are hosting this Webinar for Earth Day, led from a transnational network of mountain women. It will be a space for groups of mountain women from around

the world to share experiences and knowledge. We are glad to welcome and honour the diverse range of voices and perspectives which we will be hearing from today. Mountain Women of the World is a collaborative project by the Mujeres a la Cumbre from Argentina and Chile, Feminist Hiking Collective, Empowering Women of Nepal, Women Who Hike, Kilimanjaro Women, and Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia.

The project aims to build a transnational network of mountain women and we are currently organising its first expedition to mount Aconcagua in Argentina. We aim to build mountain women's collective feminist leadership and narrate a collective mountaineering story, strengthening economic justice for mountain women, and foregrounding the collective knowledge and experience of mountain women in defending nature and protecting mountains. We aim to create a space for shared learning, bringing together tools and knowledge and developing resources to keep building and sustaining the network. If you would like to learn more about this project then you can visit [www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org](http://www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org) and the link will be posted in the chat.

The Webinar is organised by the project partners of Mountain Women of the World, and we are so happy to also welcome the participation of: Alessandra Segantin, Alpine Community Economies Laboratory, Ana Agustina Barros, Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir, Club Alpino Italiano, Mountain Partnership, the UIAA - International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, South South Women, Topchu Art Group and Travolution.

We wanted to start the webinar by setting the framework of the term mountain protection. The Mountain Women of the World project is grounded in the protection of the mountains and the earth. By collective mountain protection we mean an approach that centres our connection and belonging to nature rather than being seen as a resource and being exploited by humans, and that foregrounds the experiences and practices of mountain communities, especially of mountain women and marginalised groups, in protecting the environment. We also want to recognise that even though today is Earth Day, we believe that the practice of earth protection should be a continuous daily process and not only limited to one day of the year.

## **Introduction to speakers and organizations**

Please note: the order and the length of the description do not reflect the importance or depth of the work of the speakers of the Webinar. The Webinar creates a space where all the different speakers, organizations, spaces, groups, enterprises and movements taking part are equally valued and important, and a space in which we foreground the diversity of the experiences, contexts, backgrounds and work. We have translated this content from multiple languages so there might be errors of interpretation and translation.

**Marilyn Caño is the spokesperson of the Mapuche community Lof Caño of Chubut in Argentina, and is part of the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir.** This is how the Movimiento describes their story: in 2013, a few of us sisters began to travel around the country with the idea of creating what is today the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir. We went in search of making visible what is made invisible: our bodies-territories, our cosmovisions, our identities and our rights

as indigenous women. All of these driving forces led us on a journey that brought together and generated the support of women from 36 pre-existing nations that cohabit the Argentinean territory. Together, we organised ourselves in the space that we call the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir. We are a movement to amplify rights. We fight for the self-determination of our bodies, our territories and our peoples. We are confident in our strength as women of the Earth.

[www.facebook.com/pg/movimientodemujeresindigenasporelbuenvivir](http://www.facebook.com/pg/movimientodemujeresindigenasporelbuenvivir)

**Ekeney Njau is the founder of Kilimanjaro Women.** Ekeney has got her degree to be a licensed mountain guide in 2019 thanks to her work experience, knowledge, skills on ice climbing, customer care, natural resources at Kilimanjaro National Park in Tanzania. She is coordinating a group of young women who work in Kilimanjaro – called Kilimanjaro Women.

Instagram: @Kilim\_anjaroWomen@Ekeney\_njau

**Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia** are a group of Aymara indigenous women from La Paz, Bolivia, who climb mountains together, and together overcome multiple layers of discrimination. They have diverse experiences, some are high mountain cooks, some porters, some work in community-based tourism, some have their own small business, some are now training to become mountain guides. They filmed a documentary in 2019 climbing the Aconcagua which is called CHOLITAS, where they explored the Mendoza area of Argentina which is where the Aconcagua Mountain is situated. They are now working on a wide range of projects. We have today with us Elena Quispe Tincuta, Lidia Huayllas Estrada and Cecilia Llusco Alaña, whereas Ana Lia and Estrella Gonzales and Dora Magueño have sent us a short video to share with you all.

[www.facebook.com/cholitas.andinistas](http://www.facebook.com/cholitas.andinistas)

**Lucky Chhetri is the co-founder of 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking and Empowering Women of Nepal.**

Empowering Women of Nepal is a non-profit organization registered in Nepal since 1999. It works with disadvantaged women and girls from rural areas of Nepal offering a comprehensive training programme to become trekking guides including English lessons, women's human rights and women's health, and a six-months paid apprenticeship. Empowering Women of Nepal works to change patriarchal norms in the Nepali society by supporting women in their self-empowerment and to help them become aware and conscious of their rights. The organization is also changing the trekking culture which was previously dominated by men. 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking is a Nepalese trekking company with over 25 years of experience organizing treks for solo-women travellers, women groups and other groups in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and India.

[www.empoweringwomenofnepal.wordpress.com](http://www.empoweringwomenofnepal.wordpress.com)

[www.3sistersadventuretrek.com/](http://www.3sistersadventuretrek.com/)

**Lorella Franceschini is the Vice-President of the Italian Alpine Club.** He has been directing and/or collaborating in numerous mountaineering courses for 20 years, both at sectional, regional and national level, both on snow and ice and on rock. He is a member of the Mountaineering Group of the Bologna

Section, where he periodically organises, together with the Farina-Stagni School of Mountaineering and Ski-Mountaineering, theoretical and practical training activities for members on the technical and cultural aspects of mountaineering and free climbing, with particular attention to the problems of accident prevention. She also organised and directed, in 2018, a mountaineering expedition to Jordan, in collaboration with the Jordan Tourism Board, to explore and map some of the country's unknown valleys, during which around 20 new routes were opened, both trad and sport; also a member of Mountain Wilderness, in 2019 she took part in an expedition to the Swat region of Pakistan, whose aim was to discover, map and georeference new mountaineering and trekking routes to give the local people the chance to develop an economy based on adventure tourism. The aim of the Italian Alpine Club (C.A.I.), founded in Turin in 1863 as a free national association, is mountaineering in all its forms, knowledge and study of the mountains, especially the Italian ones, and the defence of their natural environment.

[www.cai.it](http://www.cai.it)

**Stephanie Carmody is the director of programmes at Travolution.** Travolution is a community that was created to make tourism a tool that promotes sustainable local development through community-based tourism. Community-based tourism is a way of organising tourism activity, and not a form of tourism, in which the community plays the leading role in its design and management, and in which the benefits obtained are applied, at least partially, in areas of collective interest. We work so that encounters between people can drive improvements in the world. At Travolution we have developed different lines of action to address all the scenarios presented by the complex world of community-based tourism.

[www.travolution.org](http://www.travolution.org)

**Elena and Giulia are two of the co-founders of the Feminist Hiking Collective.** The Feminist Hiking Collective is a feminist non-profit organization registered in Italy, and a transnational hub for feminist hikers. Our aim is to build collective feminist leadership and collective feminist power through hiking and mountaineering, to contribute to building a just feminist world that is grounded in our belonging to nature. The organization is led collectively by young feminist mountain women. We focus on collaborating with all those identities oppressed by the patriarchal system. We organize feminist hiking programmes based on feminist popular education, we co-develop transnational and national projects, and co-develop collective research and communication work. Our work has a strong focus on feminist mountain protection, and we foreground the collective knowledge and experience of mountain communities. We also work to contribute to building a hiking and mountaineering culture centered on collaboration, collective care and solidarity.

[www.feministhikingcollective.org](http://www.feministhikingcollective.org)

**Dr Bianca Elzenbaumer is the founder of the Alpine Community Economies Laboratory.** Bianca Elzenbaumer is an Italian mountain inhabitant and eco-social activist. The Alpine Community Economies Lab uses participatory design methods to support alpine communities in addressing cross-cutting concerns of sustainable socio-economic development outlined in the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region and the Alpine Convention. Via a gender-sensitive and community-based research space in Rovereto (Trentino/Italy), a diversity of civic actors and policy makers is engaged in the collaborative investigation of

(trans)local economies (e.g. forestry, agriculture, tourism, crafts, energy production) sustaining the local valley district. In a series of design-led workshops and participatory projects that draw on insights from feminist economic geography, (trans)local developments are envisioned and activated that have both people and the environment at their core. Throughout the research, a multifaceted community economies toolkit will be prototyped, tested and refined to finally be released via open-access.

[www.alpinecommunityeconomies.org](http://www.alpinecommunityeconomies.org)

**Ada Rasulova is part of the Topchu Art Group.** The Topchu Art Group is an association of 7 women, living in a marginalised mountain area, that are engaged in the design and manufacture of handicrafts. Topchu works to revamp the traditional Kyrgyz knowledge in handicraft production, providing training and promoting the revival of neglected traditions. It uses ecofriendly raw material for its products. Topchu in Kyrgyz means button. The women chose this name because in the past, buttons were made of silver, so only the wealthy could afford them, but today everyone can have buttons. Traditionally, grandmothers gift every newborn with a button from their jacket to keep as a talisman.

[www.facebook.com/topchuartsalon/](https://www.facebook.com/topchuartsalon/)

**Rosalaura Romeo is the Programmes officer at the Mountain Partnership Secretariat.** The Mountain Partnership is a United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world. The Mountain Partnership is supported by a Secretariat which is hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome. The Secretariat acts as a networking and liaison point for members, connecting institutions and activities in sustainable mountain development to ensure greater participation, coherence and impact. It also engaged in raising awareness globally about the importance of mountains and in advocating for increased political attention to sustainable mountain development and the wellbeing of mountain people. In particular, the Mountain Partnership Secretariat plays a facilitating role in helping members build and develop joint activities, promote closer collaboration, and achieve greater coherence and better results for sustainable development.

[www.fao.org/mountain-partnership](http://www.fao.org/mountain-partnership)

**Zaynah Khanbhai is the founder of South South Women.** Zaynah Khanbhai is an African Woman, the power of voice for unity leading conscious enterprise and international cooperation for the Global South. South South Women is a network positioning women from the Global South as the key visionaries, strategists and implementers of impact and cooperation. Anchored on wisdom, acceptance and action, South South Women influences cultural inclusion and integration, providing a platform to amplify the voices of inspiring and aspiring women and people throughout the Global South. She is also the founding CEO of Merging Mundos, the founding President of Espartanos Africa and a Spiritual Coach.

[www.southsouthwomen.org](http://www.southsouthwomen.org)

**Alia Dattoo is the co-founder of Women Who Hike – Africa.** She is a champion for women empowerment. As part of Women Who Hike Africa, she aspires to take the teachings of the mountains back to the community and inspire more women to turn to nature and explore the great outdoors. Women Who Hike Africa Ltd. is a community that brings together Women and Men, from all walks of life, backgrounds, geographies and skill levels. Founded in August 2017, our aim is not only to re-empower individuals and communities, but also to create long lasting lifestyle changes through hiking and discovering the great outdoors.

[www.womenwhohike.africa](http://www.womenwhohike.africa)

**Popi Spagnuoli and Belen Escudero are co-founders of Mujeres a la Cumbre together with Pato Breuer Moreno.** Mujeres a la Cumbre is an enterprise based in Argentina and Chile led by mountain lovers, entrepreneurs, who develop unique and experiential experiences in the mountains for women. Their proposal is integrative, they organize international expeditions, trekking and mountain outings with all the necessary details to make the experience authentic and unforgettable. With their work they seek to be a tool for social promotion and community-based tourism and to be environmental education agents. They believe in carrying out expeditions full of profound experiences, understanding that the important thing is the path travelled. They connect with local women guides and porters to cooperate together and enrich themselves through exchanges and training in the different countries and areas they travel to or visit. They see mountaineering as a collaborative experience that builds collective power and solidarity.

[www.mujaresalacumbre.com](http://www.mujaresalacumbre.com)

#### **From the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) Mountain Protection Commission:**

**Prof. Harshwanti Bisht has 35 years of teaching experience of economics in a higher educational institution of Uttarakhand, India.** Her research work is mainly on mountain tourism and environmental conservation of Higher Himalaya, particularly in Gangotri Glacier region. At present Harshwanti is one of the vice presidents of Indian Mountaineering Foundation and Chairperson of its Environment Committee. By being the member of IMF she is Indian delegate to Mountain Protection Commission of the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation.

**Dr Carolina Adler is an Environmental Scientist and Geographer** by background. As the current Executive Director of the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), she oversees the work of the MRI Coordination Office, as well as connecting, coordinating, and promoting global change research agendas, in mountains worldwide. Carolina also shares her environmental expertise as a delegate to the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation Mountain Protection Commission, and is the Commission President since 2016.

**The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) was founded in 1932 and has a global presence on six continents representing 90 member associations and federations in 67**



**countries.** The UIAA promotes the growth and protection of mountaineering and climbing worldwide. The UIAA is the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation. As the leading global network, they promote climbing and mountaineering and advocate for access to climbing areas and mountain ranges. While looking to the future, they value their heritage and care for the mountains, their fragile ecosystems, vulnerable communities and cultures. They serve the best interests of their member federations and of their worldwide community.

[www.theuiaa.org](http://www.theuiaa.org)

**Ana Agustina Barros works at the National Institute for Research in Glaciology, Nivology and Environmental Sciences in Argentina.** They conduct research across the Andean Cordillera in a diverse of topics including geology, glaciology, plant ecology, dendrochronology among others. Her expertise lies in alpine ecology, recreation ecology and protected areas management. She researched on ecological impacts from tourism use in Aconcagua Provincial Park, in the Dry Arid Andes of Argentina. She worked as a conservation practitioner for mountain protected areas of Mendoza for over five years, as a communication officer for Mountain Forum in Kathmandu Nepal for over two years and is currently researching on alpine ecology. She is interested in assessing mountain plant invasions, and the influence of human disturbance and climate change on mountain ecosystems. Currently she is co-leading a project for restoring burnt sites in the mountain areas of Mendoza.

<https://www.mendoza.conicet.gov.ar/>

**Alessandra Segantin is an International Mountain Leader.** Born in the province of Venice, below sea level, she started to explore the Dolomites with her parents from an early age to adolescence. After a few years away from the mountains, Alessandra started to develop a strong interest in high latitudes. Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Norway and Iceland with their harsh and boundless nature have become her second home. For several years she has alternated long periods of work as a guide abroad with months of hiking, climbing and exploring mainly in the Veneto and Trentino Dolomites. In 2018 she became a Wilderness First Responder and in 2020 an International Mountain Leader.

[www.patagonitana.com](http://www.patagonitana.com)

## **Key content of presentations**

Please note: not all details of the presentations are included in this resource. We will aim to create and share key resources with all participants after the Webinar, through email and across our online spaces. We have translated this content from multiple languages so there might be errors of interpretation and translation.

**Marilyn Caño - spokesperson of the Mapuche community Lof Caño of Chubut in Argentina, and part of the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir**

Mari Mari kom pu che

Hello everyone

My name is Marilin Caño, I am Mapuche, my community is called Cerro León - it is located 10 kilometres from the town of El Maitén, in the north-east of the province of Chubut, on the border with Rio Negro, in what is today known as Argentina.

I am 28 years old; I am the spokesperson of my community. For three years we have been part of the Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir, a movement that formally began in 2015. It is a movement in which women from 36 indigenous nations participate. We recognise ourselves as anti-patriarchal, anti-colonialist, anti-racist, and our politics are also formed from our ancestry. I am the fifth generation in this territory. My people, my family, have inhabited these lands for more than 150 years. In 2010, we suffered a new outrage by the municipality of El Maitén and the province of Chubut, who tried to carry out a mega tourism project of 19 ski slopes. They cut down about five hundred metres square of native forest, built a refuge in the middle of the mountains without consulting us, without respecting our places of ceremony, it was an outrage and even today we continue to suffer discrimination, because they blame us that we are stopping the progress of the town, so many people believe these speeches, and we are constantly attacked by local media, or through the pages they use on the internet, always trying to stigmatise us, or the continuous persecution we have also suffered a lot since we started to defend the territory, the hill, the mountains, because when we tell them that we have to defend the territory, our source of life, of energy, they call us terrorists because we don't have their way of thinking, we are an autonomous community, our autonomy depends on the territory, our spirituality depends on the territory, in that place live ancestral forces, forces that accompany us continuously, and for us it is a duty and a responsibility to continue defending that space, even though whatever happens we cannot abandon that place.

These last few months, these last times, the Comarca has been suffering fires, political fires, it is a capitalist fire because we believe these are coveted places, they see money where we see life. So they started to clear the territories by burning them. We understand that mega-mining today is knocking on the doors, threatening the mountains, threatening the rivers, the little fresh water that is left, the oil companies the same, as the hydroelectric companies and the monocultures like strawberries, because they throw a lot of chemicals, we also have this here in El Maitén, then the predatory tourism - they don't care about cutting down entire mountains to install ski slopes - here in the region, in Rio Negro, in Bariloche and more – ski tourism sells a lot. Just before the fires, roads were blocked to say no to the mining companies, and a few days later the whole Comarca began to burn, in different places there were different fires that in less than four hours destroyed a large part of the native forest, in fact very little is left. We from our community organised ourselves to put out the fire, so that it would not advance towards the territory.

We organised ourselves with other communities, with other people in solidarity, with friends, with people with conscience, to defend the forest. Every time we called the fire brigade, the civil defence, those in charge of fire management - the first day on the 9th of March - they told us to evacuate ourselves, to throw water and get out of the place. We couldn't throw water, we had no electricity, it was already half past eight at night, the fire was coming through the mountain from the back of the lof, the community, so we had no way to do anything. Everywhere we looked there was fire, when we tried to communicate with other people in the Comarca they were in the same situation, because this intentional fire was unleashed in different nearby communities, they destroyed the whole forest. My mother told me: we can't leave. So they were

willing to stay. So we couldn't leave either. Our commitment to the territory was to stay. If it goes, we go with the territory. Between desperation and tears from seeing ourselves surrounded by fire, what we did was to resort to our spirituality, to talk to our ancestors, and to talk to nature itself, to talk to the rain, that the fire would not burn us, that the fire would not come, that it would rain. It was 10 o'clock at night. And we saw that the fire was going down. Something incredible happened, every time I remember it is hard to believe, we know that our ancestors in the strength of the territory are with us. The mountain, the territory, protected us from the fire. When the fire, who was coming at the speed of the wind, reached the boundary where the field of the community begins where we are, it was like a bubble came in, and the fire came from the sides, it didn't go through the territory. In fact, none of the animals in the community were burned. Everything around was burnt, but it was as if the fire surrounded the whole territory and did not enter. At no time did it enter where we are.

This awoke the solidarity of the people. We understand that every time they try to spread fear to eliminate solidarity, in reality what they do is to awaken the forces, and the union among the people. Because that is what helped in our case to defend the forest, that people helped us and brought us closer in different ways.

So today more than ever, we are walking to Buenos Aires, to say enough of this terricide, that they stop killing us, because by burning these ancestral forests, by burning these mountains, they kill us spiritually, they take away our strength, they kill the rivers, the mountains, the forests, the waterfalls, the streams, they kill all life. The plurality of beings disappears. Because that is the strength that we have, that is the connection that we have with the territory. For us, the territory gives us life, autonomy, our spirituality is based on the land. We can discuss how to inhabit a place, but not how to destroy it. So from the Movimiento de Mujeres Indigenas por el Buen Vivir, we are weaving networks to save the Earth, because we see that everything that has to do with capitalism is killing everything, and it not only affects us indigenous communities, the women who are in the front line because we are in the territories, but also all humans who live on Earth because capitalism is destroying nature, they are destroying the only lung that the world has left, which are the native forests, the mountains, so I think it is time to awaken consciousness to save what is left of this planet.

A way for us to be in touch with nature is through spirituality. We talk to our ancestors, through ceremonies we offer them seeds, we offer them songs, we offer them dances, there are different ceremonies for different events, where we interact with the force of the mountain, of the fire, of the river, of the lakes, of the forest, we dialogue through ceremonies, this is a way of being in constant contact with the river, with the lakes, with the forest, we dialogue through ceremonies, this is a way of being contact every day, this is our culture, our spirituality, as Mapuche, living and acting as Mapuche, every day this is our way of living in contact with the Earth.

### **Ekeney Njau of Kilimanjaro Women**

Hello, my name is Ekeney Njau. I was born in the Kilimanjaro region. I am a Tanzanian local guide which concerns trekking Mt. Kilimanjaro and other mountains like Mt. Tanzania. I do other things e.g. waterfall hikes, culture and tourism, cycling and safari.

I have experience of working in tourism for 18 years and through my experience and the challenges I had, I created an organization of women which is known as Kilimanjaro women. As for now we are 20 members in this organization and all of us, we are able to work as a team in Mt. Kilimanjaro.

It is very important to have women in tourism, especially for the women. Otherwise it is hard for us to depend ourselves to get our basic needs met. However, I got a lot of challenge to promote more women in my work place because most of the tour companies, they do not employ women. So this is really difficult for us. This is why we want to have our own company.

Finally, by my experience in nature, in my workplace, we do a lot of action taking care of the environment like collecting trash in the mountains. Also last year, me and other member women, we joined the Kilimanjaro National Park to stop the fire which was burning the Kilimanjaro forests. Really we do, I do love nature, I do! We have to love nature and take care of the environment because the environment takes care of us.

Thank you.

### **Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia**

We celebrate our Mother Earth. The offering ceremonies, commonly known by the Andean people as “*offering to the Pachamama*” are rituals of the ancestors. The offerings are part of a system of reciprocity between the material world and the spiritual world. *Pachamama* is our Mother Earth. The *Achachilas* are the mountains. We ask for permission from the *Pachamama* to climb the mountains offering coca leaves and alcohol. It is the same with the land before starting to work it for crops.

**Lidia Huayllas Estrada** - I am the coordinator of the Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia.

I started coming to the mountains very young working as a high mountain cook 15 years ago.

I had access to reach up to 5200 meters above sea level, but over the years I always had that desire to go to the mountains to reach the summit.

I looked at the mountain with the desire to climb. I called my women friends and gathered them to encourage one another and make our first summit at Huayna Potosí. Eleven Cholitas went up and reached the summit.

**Elena Quispe Tincuta** - My name is Elena Quispe Tincuta, I am part of the Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia. I am from the Chucura community, where I started working with tourists since I was 8 years old. At the age of 14 I came to the city and together with my brothers I worked with tourists as a porter. My brothers were mountain guides.

I always wondered why tourists were that happy coming back from a summit...my brothers said that the landscape is very beautiful that's why I wanted to get to those summits and understand what it looks like. But I wanted to go with the clothes I have, with my *pollera*. They told me it was dangerous and mountain equipment was expensive. My women friends had already climbed on December 17th, 2015. They were already organizing another expedition and I joined them thanks to Lidia.

Men told us that we were not going to be able to climb with our *polleras*, there was a lot of discrimination. We had shown that it was possible...this made us stronger.

**Cecilia Llusco Alaña** - I am one of the Cholitas Escaladoras from Bolivia. I come from a tourist community called Chucura, which is the Inca Trail.

From a very young age I accompanied my father working with tourism and I got to know the mountains and trekking. My dad explained to me that tourists were going to climb the mountain. I met my husband working in the mountains. He is a high mountain guide. I worked with him as a cook and porter in the mountains of Bolivia.

My dream was to climb mountains...I asked my husband what it felt like to go to the top...I wanted to see it first-hand...He didn't want to take me because he said it was dangerous because of my *pollera*. I didn't want to take it off because that's how I dress, I'm an Aymara indigenous woman.

My dream was to climb up one day but keeping the way I dress. My women friends had that dream too. In 2015 (December 17th) 11 cholitas got together and managed to climb Huayna Potosí. We were able to see with our own eyes what it was like up there.

#### **Video from Ana Lia Gonzales and Dora Magueño:**

We are the Cholitas Escaladoras Maya. On this day we wanted to share as a family, and take a walk in our mountains of La Paz. Our purpose as climbers is to give our message wherever we go, and our main message is that we take care of our mountains, our environment. We stay on the path to avoid destroying the vegetation of the place. We take care of taking away the garbage of the place as well. We always carry coca and alcohol to ask the *Pachamama* and the *Achachilas* to give us good weather, strength, and ask them for permission to climb mountains because we want to continue climbing.

We want to share with you the importance of taking care of our natural environment, value the water that comes down from the mountains, try making the least possible impact. This our message to our mountain-loving friends.

#### **Panel 1 - Sharing experiences and practices for community-led mountain tourism grounded in mountain protection.**

##### **Lucky Chhetri – Empowering Women of Nepal / 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking**

Namaste, I am Lucky Chhetri, one of the founders of 3 Sisters Adventure trekking company and of the non-profit organization Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN), working together with my two sisters since 1994. It has been given us enormous opportunity to learn about tourism. As per my understanding, tourism is multi dimensional.

It is beyond traveling, fun and adventures. It can support all different aspects around us like our nature, culture, environment and other fundamental rights and social issues. Like women empowerment.

The travel and tourism sector is one of the world's largest economic sectors. It is not only changing lives, but changing the world. This could be a great tool for women economic empowerment in Nepal because tourism is one of the major economic resources of the country. Employment generates women's self-dignity. It will help people to be self-sufficient and then open up slowly to expand their boundaries. They can take decisions for themselves.

Women are culturally oppressed in Nepal. Women are seen as the key person to maintain and preserve all their culture and tradition at home and in the society, and as accountable for their family as well as their society. So automatically they start limiting themselves, and compromising their own progresses. Then often the output will be shy, fearful women who underestimate their own capacity and have no hope for the future. They stay at home, busy with their domestic chores, no time for themselves. They suppressed all their potentials for the wellbeing of their families. Women are poor, and left behind.

In 1994, we started a trekking guide services for women trekkers in the Himalayas by our own. It was a new concept to work as a woman trekking guide. Women were not allowed to work in tourism; it was a kind of Cultural Revolution. Conservative people were afraid with our initiation. But we kept continuing our work and encouraging other women to join us to be trekking guides. Slowly women started showing their interest to work on this field. But we soon realized there was a need for training. After the training including on-the-job traineeship, women were more comfortable to pursue in this field. After four years experimenting, we registered a company and a non-profit organization in 1998/99, together it is a social enterprise.

3 Sisters trekking and EWN work in partnership to promote and empower women through adventure tourism. Together we combine practical skill-based training programs with gainful employment opportunities. Our goal is to encourage our fellow Nepali sisters to become self-supportive, independent women. We are still doing this.

Our training programme is helping women to enter into this new profession. This has resulted in over 2000 women becoming trekking guides, and paved a path for many women to choose to work in tourism. The women trekking service has been replicated in many countries. It added new job opportunities for women.

Our patience has helped us to never get tired to encourage women to get involved in tourism. Our unique training package with paid apprenticeship program helped women to work in tourism. But it was not enough to continue our mission. It was a kind of cultural revolution so we had to strongly advocate for women's right to decent work in tourism. Threatening the men's monopoly was a great threat. So every day, we had/have to deal with different issues/ situations, and all those situations giving us the clear pictures of the women situation here. Day by day women participation in working in tourism is growing, it creates employment opportunity for many underprivileged women.

Many young women are migrating for the labor work in Gulf countries, and are exposed to different challenges. So we also do this work to be able to provide work opportunities in Nepal. Also, solo women tourists experience hassle free trekking and get cultural exchange opportunities.

Being a trekking guide means that they will get chance to visit their own country and earn good wages compare to other areas. It is an international profession they have to learn different language, different cultures and surrounding which allow them to become aware of many things.

We also worked in community development tourism in the west Nepal – Karnali province. Karnali is in the North West, It is very isolated and poor. During insurgency time, we read in the newspaper, people are starving in the west Nepal. So we visited the communities. We surveyed trekking to three different districts from Humla, Mugu via Rara to Jumla. Rara is the biggest fresh water beautiful lake in Nepal.

But you can see the index of Karnali. 28.9% people live below poverty which is now has been improved a lot compared to our survey in 2003. Life expectancy was just 45 years and now is 67. It is like a barren land, there were only wheat, buckwheat, and potatoes grow, which was not sufficient for the family. People were hungry and angry, we understood them. We decided to work in that area. We organized several workshops with the communities, local organizations and local authorities. Then we made a 10-year strategic plan to proceed our Eco-Tourism programs to support Karnali communities. Tourism, hospitality and other information about different areas encourage women to develop local crafts. Other additional information about tourism was also useful for them.

## **Lorella Franceschini – Italian Alpine Club (CAI)**

### **CAI and environmental sustainability in frequenting the highlands**

As prophesied by Leslie Stephen, father of Virginia Woolf, the Alps have become the biggest playground of the cities today; and never before has this been so evident.

The urban consumerist model has led to a crisis in the Alpine economy and the end of a civilisation that, with its ups and downs, but always in diversity and autonomy, has survived for over a millennium.

The affirmation of mass tourism and skiing on the slopes has overwhelmed the rural tradition built on savings, sobriety and diversity; what was essentially an autarkic economy, favoured by a sort of "inattention" of power towards inconvenient and apparently useless territories, has no longer been able to compete, in recent decades, with the economy of the plains, which has seduced, revolted and regretted it. In the words of Enrico Camanni:

"From the sea of Ventimiglia to the sea of Trieste, the ancient and the hypermodern coexist, too little and too much, museum and amusement park, ghost town and Disneyland coexist without hardly ever speaking to each other. The picture of the world's most famous mountains is paradoxical; depopulated valleys poor in almost everything next to valleys overpopulated for two or three months of the year and overbuilt, with condominiums and hotels of urban design, cold beds, car parks, cinemas, boutiques, restaurants and nightclubs. An unreal world in which the ghosts of the 'how we were' hover, in the name of a bar or some fashionable hangout, in the old prints that fade on the walls, in the tanned faces of old and new mountain dwellers suspended between two civilisations, a lost past and an indeterminate future."

All lost? Perhaps not.

The ancient myth of the heroic mountain and the rebel mountain, the key to defining the role of the highlands in the history of Italy, occasionally emerges and makes its voice heard.

Although drowned in the conformism of the mountain majority, now more of a citizen than the citizens themselves, some voices claim a geographical and cultural diversity that has its origins in the ancient vice of hiding and sheltering the rebels, the different, the resistant.

And considering that from an environmental point of view the Alps are Europe's green lung and an invaluable laboratory of biodiversity, in this context of climate change, in this increasingly green vision of the planet we live in, accentuated and amplified by the recent pandemic, the CAI must also do its part.

The pandemic has undoubtedly increased our sense of responsibility and taught us not to act on the basis of rational calculation alone, but on the basis of broader human perceptions, reasoning on an approach that is no longer based solely and exclusively on profit, but on what some call corporate humanism, as an engine for the production of that trust that is essential for laying the foundations of a new normality.

In other words, the relationship between companies and the territory must no longer be built exclusively on profit but must be compatible with people and the planet; "profit" therefore as a mechanism that allows human and environmental reproduction according to generative and not extractive criteria.

The "mountaineers' village" project is certainly heading in this direction, and it is important that the CAI supports and amplifies the message coming from the mountain communities that strongly want to claim this title, but it is not enough.

We must be indignant and react with determination to the destruction of the landscape and mountain traditions, because opposition to any form of colonisation of non-traditionally anthropised mountain areas is rooted in the genuine cultural dimension that we attribute to the relationship between civilised man and uncontaminated nature.

If this relationship were to be reduced to a trivially playful and gymnastic perspective, it would lose its most authentic connotations.

Equipping wild mountains with ski lifts for skiing on snow that is now in extinction, levelling slopes, clearing forests, erecting concrete pylons that will remain there forever even if they are not used, digging water reservoirs for artificial snow, to the detriment of supplies for civil and agricultural use, building useless high altitude roads, plaisir-sized via ferrata and so on, is tantamount to domesticating a geographical environment that derives its meaning precisely from the fact that it is not tamed and cannot be domesticated.

The forced and unnatural anthropisation of these spaces irreparably suffocates their vocation.

Trivialising the mountains to make them accessible to everyone is not good, because mountains are not for everyone. Mountain does not only mean adventure, as the media try to make us believe, it means cold and heat, it means sweat and toil, it means being afraid and being able to overcome it.

And it is not for everyone, we must convince ourselves of this; especially we, CAI, who speak of sustainable tourism and the enhancement of mountain identity.

I realise that the majority of the people who visit our mountains (and, I must say, some of our members too) are not culturally prepared to understand the need for a sustainable approach to such a delicate environment, and that taking an extremist stance can be counterproductive; but that does not mean that this is not the case.



We cannot pretend to ignore the fact that mountain huts resembling high-altitude hotels, or ski slopes perfectly groomed on fake snow, or via ferrata routes offering cheap adrenaline-pumping thrills, or electric bicycles that make the difficult easy, conceal a subtle and insidious mystification; they represent the first step on the descent towards a predominantly recreational and trivial use of the mountains.

And I don't think it's useless to remind the holiday crowds every now and then who want to experience the thrill of verticality on rocks or the wind in their hair while sliding on snow, that it's the risks associated with these activities that give them a profound meaning.

Perfect pistes, super-safe via ferratas, hyper-tracked trails, are certainly fun, but where is the freedom to decide one's own route, the ability to learn from one's mistakes, the ingenuity to find ways out of difficulties and dangers?

All this is not educational, it encourages passive attitudes and does not free us from the urban conditioning to which we are subject. And the CAI must say so.

The Italian Alpine Club has always been committed, thanks to the precious work of its people, to preserving man from the risks of the mountains, but today it is perhaps more urgent to preserve the mountains from man; even if this may mean losing some members, doing fewer courses, or organising fewer excursions. All is not lost, there is still a fabulous world, rich in art and memories where the woods, the skies and the mountains provide a force for beauty and serenity.

We must become promoters and advocates of communities committed to keeping the culture and traditions of their mountains intact, and able to inspire and educate visitors to a virtuous approach and respect for the environment. An approach that cannot be the massified approach of skiing weeks in Cortina or of two-coach "excursions".

Because, whether we understand it or not, the stakes are too high.

### **Stephanie Carmody - Travolution**

- Travolution Culture
- Travolution Movement. We seek to encourage meetings and exchanges between each member of our network. In particular, at the territorial level, we are convinced of the importance of connecting, building links and articulating the relevant actors for the development of community-based tourism. This is how the Travolution movement has been growing around the world and the regional and international networks that support it have been generated. We are a movement that seeks to establish Community-Based Tourism as a tool for sustainable local development from the communities' perspective. We work collaboratively and focus on: networks, local development, tour operator & research.
- Why community-based tourism? We answer this question from three perspectives: environmental, economic and socio-cultural. Firstly, tourism promotes the care of natural spaces and its impacts can only be managed in a communal way, with the collaborative work of all those involved. From an economic perspective, tourism is able to generate complementary income, often greater than other means of livelihood, and on the other hand, it is also presented as a new source of local employment, which mitigates processes such as the migration of young people to the cities. Finally, tourism activity is a unique opportunity to re-value and make known to the world the great wealth

that communities possess, especially in terms of cultural diversity and authenticity. For the correct development of community-based tourism, it is essential to include all actors to support the processes of marketing, networking and training. These processes help to improve development and conservation standards and policies, raising awareness across the industry to work from a community perspective. Community-based tourism can be a key tool for sustainable local development and we work to welcome and encourage each of these cross-cultural experiences to contribute to positive change in the communities and travellers who rely on us.

- Working in collaboration within indigenous communities in Chile, especially women.
- Hiking and mountain experiences with local communities.

## **Panel 2 - Sharing practices to strengthen economic justice for mountain women and sharing learnings and ideas on how mountaineering builds women's collective power and collective feminist leadership**

### **Feminist Hiking Collective: building collective feminist leadership and power through hiking and mountaineering**

Talking about defending the Earth – we foreground and honour the collective resistance of Earth Defenders across territories worldwide, that resist to extractivism, racism, capitalism, neoliberalism and all forms of oppression, dominance and discrimination – we stand by their resistance and we acknowledge that those defending the Earth on the frontlines are facing risks to their lives every day. We need to be grounded in learning from the communities that have remained close to nature, communities who have resisted to the neoliberal capitalist ways, who have lived in harmony with the mountains. We need to learn from their experience without extracting or decontextualising knowledge, and work in solidarity.

The pandemic has intensified the urgency of transformative systemic and cultural change. The impact of the ecosystem's destruction, caused by the consideration of the Earth as a resource at the disposal of humans, is now clearer than ever. It is vital to foreground and re-signify the fundamental understanding that we are interconnected and belong to nature, and that we can only recover if we are grounded in solidarity and collective care.

We are developing a framework and tools for what we call feminist mountain protection, by which we mean an approach that centres our connection and belonging to nature. This approach honours and foregrounds the experiences and practices of mountain communities, especially of mountain women and marginalised groups, in protecting nature.

Protecting the mountains for us is intrinsically connected with building collective feminist leadership and power. In our work we focus on doing this through mountaineering and feminist hiking, as a way to reconnect with nature, and with our inner and collective power. We do this based on a process of feminist popular education – learning from our experiences, analysing them together, learning to understand and analyse power and structures. This has a strong element of working on ourselves deeply. Hiking and mountaineering are also a resilience-building process per se, based on collective care and being present in the moment. Our activities are the process of the experience and learnings from the transformative work

and resources of feminist movements, organizations and groups from across the world, whose work we acknowledge and aim to honour through our work. We interweave feminist popular education activities with other tools to build feminist leadership and power, also with elements of ecological awareness thanks to the work of Attention Recalibration, and sound/theatre/movement based non-verbal tools, breathwork, mindfulness, grounding and territorial knowledge, including herbs and trees knowledge.

Talking about economic justice for mountain women, we need to learn from experiences and experiments of new economic models – bringing in feminist economic alternatives that are grounded in solidarity, cooperation and collective care – really transforming the economic model, because the one that is currently dominant – capitalism, and the connected ideological framework of neoliberalism, is causing the destruction of the Earth. Capitalism and neoliberalism are the framework of extractivism and of consumerist tourism that disregards nature and communities, and the depredatory approach of corporations that are driven by profit and disregard life. And this is all deeply interlinked with competition, egocentrism, consumerism, and with the self-centred, individualistic narrative of leadership and power. We need to transform the system and structures if we are to go to the root causes of the destruction of the Earth – we believe this is necessary and deeply linked with raising collective awareness and consciousness, connected with education on leave no trace and mountain protection practices.

And this is also connected with changing the narrative of individualised leadership and power – building the awareness that we are interconnected and belong to nature – is it a transformative process collectively led. We need to change the way that we frame ourselves – not aspiring or claiming to be the first, the best, the youngest, not competing against each other, but considering ourselves as part of wider collective efforts to create change, all having a role to play to be able to continue walking together, even within lot of difference, building humility, because our power within is only ignited when we are part of collective power! And we know that what creates transformative change is the power of movements, networks, collaboration – indeed collective power!

We need to stop understanding leadership as an individual practice, or as a “virtue” that only some have or something that is somehow bestowed upon a few “superior” people – it's not really about placing the attention on individual feminist leaders. The whole nature of feminist leadership is about building collective power, so that there is no dynamic of inspirational leader/follower, protagonist/spectators. We work to build a transformative practice of leadership, meaning taking collective responsibility to create change together. If we reflect on the individualistic leadership dynamic in hiking, we can make a comparison between the protagonist sole mountain hiker and the group that goes perhaps slower but together. The former aims to reach the highest peaks and to face challenges on their own, as a “hero”. In contrast, the group focuses on their collective journey and achievement, on caring for and supporting each other, and nobody champions above others – it's not about any singular effort.

The depredation of the Earth is deeply connected with all other forms of violence, dominance, oppression and discrimination that are part of the neo-colonial, racist, neoliberal patriarchal system. For us feminism is a collective commitment and practice to dismantle this patriarchal system, and to build an inclusive society as a community that sees every being as having the same worth and importance. Feminist leadership aims to profoundly transform the way that leadership and power are understood and practised, it is at the heart

of creating non-oppressive environments and transformative social change, and is necessary to build a just world for all nature.

We can only achieve change if we work together and if we focus on building our collective power: not seeking to be “the best”, not to climb the “highest peak” on our own, but rather building a diverse, plural expedition team where we complement each other and where everyone has a role to play in an equally important way.

### **Bianca Elzenbaumer – Alpine Community Economies Lab**

I'm Bianca Elzenbaumer, an Italian mountain inhabitant and eco-social activist. I'm a founder of the *Alpine Community Economies Lab*. Currently we are 12 people in the lab collaborating with about 25 associations, 6 municipalities and the valley district management. Together we activate participatory and artistic ways of working to support the creation of economies which have the well-being of humans *and* the environment at their core. In fact we call this community economies.

Community economies are economies that have the well-being of people and the environment at their core. They are based on an understanding of economies as always diverse: not just what we read about in the 4 four pages of the newspaper – capitalist finance, waged work, production for the market; but made of many more mutual and caring activities such as child care, self-provisioning, care for the land, help between neighbours, breast-feeding and much much more.

Currently we are developing four community economies initiatives:

- With *Comunità Frizzante* (sparkling community) we produce fizzy drinks with thought-provoking flavour as a way to re-think in action how we want to live in our valley. This is all done through participatory processes: from creating flavour ideas, going picking, transforming, circulating the drinks.
- With *La Foresta – Community Academy* we are creating a hub for community economies, commons and food sovereignty at the local train station. This is about creating a space where “agents of eco-social transformation” can act and strategize together.
- With *Forno Vagabondo – a travelling bread oven* we go into local parks to involve kids and parents into making sourdough bread with local flours. As a way to cultivate an awareness of sustainable farming and building up home-baking skills.
- With *Sottobosco – growing up in nature* we are running a forest kindergarten in a mountain farm. This is about allowing the kids from early age to connect to the mountains and their ecological processes.

This is where we are at now and we work on interconnecting these initiatives between them but also with many others to work towards a critical mass that can change the way we live in our mountains. There are more initiatives planned. These are based on 15 workshops we ran just before the pandemic to imagine where with 100 people we imagined what a socially and ecologically just future in the valley could look and feel like.

Thank you for listening and thank you for allowing me to listen to you all.

## **Ada Rasulova – Topchu Art Group**

Artisan group:

- 5 women in Barskoon, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan - located at 1 753 m
- Women gain support from each other and earn extra income
- Create textiles, carpets, clothes, silk scarves and wall hangings adorned with felt
- Joined Mountain Partnership Products Initiative in 2017

Felt: an ancient tradition:

- Traditional material used to decorate yurts and make blankets and clothing
- Vital source of warmth and central role to Kyrgyz culture
- Local sheep's wool and Uzbek silk, fused using "wet felting" technique
- Extra income helps support children's education and improves food security

## **RosaLaura Romeo – Mountain Partnership Secretariat**

Empowering Mountain Women through Partnerships

The Mountain Partnership: 424 members: the only United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world

- 60 Governments
- 8 Subnational Authorities
- 18 IGOs
- 25 Global Major Groups
- 313 Civil Society Organizations

Secretariat hosted by FAO, supported by Andorra, Italy & Switzerland

Women & mountains

Mountain women are:

- Primary managers of mountain resources and guardians of biodiversity
- Main actors in terms of agriculture, animal husbandry and other small scale economic activities
- Keepers of traditional knowledge, custodians of local culture and experts in traditional medicine

Mountain women face inequalities:

- Rarely participate in decisions affecting the management and use of local resources
- Have little access to ownership and land tenure rights, education, health services and training
- Face discrimination in the allocation of food, therefore at greater risk of hunger and malnutrition

Mountain Partnership Secretariat Pillars of work:

- Advocacy
- Capacity development
- Knowledge sharing and communications
- Joint action at global level

Mountain Partnership Products Initiative:

- 10000 farmers supported
- 6000 women
- 40% production increase
- 20 products
- 16 producer organizations
- 25% price increase
- 12 countries
- 49% sales increase

**Panel 3 - Stories and experiences in connection with building collective healing and care**

**Zaynah Khanbhai – South South Women**

South South Women Values:

Inclusion: we engage and involve people across a broad spectrum;

Acceptance: we cultivate safety and security for people to feel embraced;

Honour: we do what is consciously right.

The South South Woman, like our logo, inspired by the bright Southern Cross constellation, is a seeker, an adventurer and a guide. She lives by a code of honour that transcends cultures, continents and gender. Her code of honour is dignified. She sets the standard for how she is treated by others. She sets the standards for how she treats others. She sets the standard for how she treats the Earth.

South South Women Code of Honour:

we stand for (and never deride) one another;

we respect the Source and consider the other's industry, profession, business, enterprise, expertise, network and contacts;

we respect the integrity of the creation of the network;

we speak truth;

we seek to understand.

## **Popi Spagnuoli and Belen Escudero – Mujeres a la Cumbre**

For us, "Defending the Earth" means protecting our Mother, now and for future generations. These are small daily actions that contribute to the actions of conscientious people to preserve and improve our Pacha Mama

**Belén Escudero** is an instructor of mountaineering. She ascended Cerro Aconcagua at the age of 17 and then Kilimanjaro, among other mountains. She has lived outside Mendoza for more than 15 years, including in countries such as Chile, England, Canada and Spain. Today she is mother of 4.

**Pato Breuer Moreno** is a Trekking Guide, mountaineer, passionate about trail running. Graduated in Sciences of Education, specialized in Social Management and corporate social responsibility. She currently lives with her husband in Santiago de Chile. She has climbed numerous mountains in Argentina, Chile, Nepal, Bolivia, and Kilimanjaro in Africa. Pato is from Buenos Aires, she lived more than 5 years in Mendoza.

**Popi Spagnuoli** is a Mountain Guide, mother and mountaineering instructor. Teacher at the Mendoza Mountaineering Guiding School, she has worked in Aconcagua Park for many years guiding and reaching summit 23 times. She did trekking and ascents in different mountains of the world.

In 2018 we created Mujeres a la Cumbre, this endeavor being our greatest inspiration.

We are entrepreneurs who made different products for women. Our proposal is to bring the mountains closer to women, taking care of every detail and facilitating unique and unforgettable experiences. Our proposal is inclusive. We provide a comprehensive approach, we provide the necessary emotional, security and logistics support, including inner work.

We are committed to society and the environment. So with our work we seek to be a tool for social promotion, community tourism and to be environmental educators. In each place we visit, we connect with local women guides and porters to cooperate together and enrich ourselves through exchanges and training.

## **Women Who Hike - Africa: Connecting to the Wisdom of Nature**

Everything is Energy: did you know that when you are in Nature, abundant energy surrounds you? All that is around you is filled with energy because all of life IS energy. Science has confirmed that every living thing, from the animal in the forest, each tree, each rock, and every grain of soil is as unique as you and I, and made from energy, containing consciousness.

By understanding this, today I see the trees, and indeed all of nature, differently. And it is through Women Who Hike-Africa that we intend to promote the concept of Mindful Hiking.

Benefits of Connecting with Nature:

- Increases Immunity, balances energy and reduces stress
- Breathing in Fresh Air
- Holistic healing and connection with our body

Lessons from Nature

The Roots: the intricate root systems that not only secure the tree body above ground but form an extensive communication network, imparting and receiving information. This example and knowledge remind us that we are all connected, and through every experience, are sharing understanding and insight on the same ground, whilst learning the truth, that love is at the core of everything.

The Seasons: just like Nature, we too have cyclical and seasonal growth periods and it's these very seasons that form the natural unending cycle of life, their interaction creating unity and cohesion on all the different levels of existence.

Acceptance of the Moment: nature's quiet wisdom permeates inner and outer environments. They teach us to reach down deep and to open our arms and hearts to welcome the light of the moment. Their still presence communicates total acceptance in the moment. Trees teach us about dignity and grace in the final letting go and remind us that everything returns to the Earth as an offering of nutrients for new generations.

### Mindful Hiking

Mindful Hiking begins with you stepping into Nature with intention requires a letting go of any distractions, the most common one these days being technology.

Make the conscious choice to immerse yourself in your activity.

Our Connection to the Sacred Power, Beauty, and Wisdom of nature offers a form of global connection to the rest of humanity.

### Methods of Mindful Hiking

Being in the Present: Pause to meditate on the unique and profound features of the natural world around you: the bark of a tree, the softest breeze, the tiniest mushroom, a busy insect

Forest Bathing: A Japanese mindfulness practice that has nothing to do with water, but one in which people literally "bathe" all of their senses in the beauty and nature of the woods. The original Japanese phrase for the practice, *shinrin-yoku*, literally means "taking in the forest atmosphere." It is a chance to smell the pine trees, touch the moss, taste the dewy air.

Tree Hugging: Hugging a tree makes you feel calm and grounded. Tree-hugging can be especially refreshing if you have been working too long, feel stressed, or have had too much screen time and feel disconnected.

Meditation in Motion: Focus on elements of nature that appeal to you. Focus on how they make you feel, what sensations they evoke within you, and what you find attractive about that setting / element. Take mental photographs of the element/ setting and consciously acknowledge your connection with yourself and your connection nature and its energy.

Grounding: If you are mindful that we are all connected, that we are ONE, this energy can be yours. We are all part of the whole, just open your heart to receive. Let the love radiate to you and from you!

### Environmental Considerations: Nature's Gifts of Trees

Habitat and Food: trees are one of this world's greatest joys and blessings. They soar to the heavens, stabilize the soil through their vast root systems, are the largest oxygen producing plants on the planet and blanket mountains, creating cloud forest reserves with wide varieties of biodiversity. Trees provide habitat and food and have stood as sentinels to our changing history for millennia.



Beauty: they inspire with their unique beauty and spellbinding majesty. They define areas by weaving their ancient branches and roots between moss and lichen-covered rocks.

Stillness: trees evoke stillness and a profound sense of presence and place.

Gratitude: they evoke gratitude and humility and when in blossom can fragrance the air for miles. There are those trees whose antiquity sobers the least reverent whilst imparting intoxicating soul teachings.

#### **Panel 4 - Sharing practices and knowledge for protecting the mountains, and sharing experiences on how mountain women are impacted by climate change and how we can strategize to create change together to defend the Earth**

##### **Hashwanti Bisht – UIAA Mountain Protection Commission: tree plantation and ecological conservation work near the snout of Gangotri glacier in Indian Himalaya**

Location and Introduction - Gangotri-Gaumukh lies in 78° 55' to 79° 10' E longitudes and 30° 1' N latitude (with an altitude variation between 3000-4000 meter). Gangotri, one of the four famous religious places of Hindu pilgrimage in Garhwal Himalaya, is approximately 517 km from Delhi, the Indian capital city.

Pilgrimage to Gangotri for a Hindu is the life time ambition to be fulfilled, at least once in life time. Gangotri temple, Bhagirathi River, Surya kund, snout of Gangotri glacier (Gaumukh) snow covered peaks, 28 km long Gangotri glacier and its tributary glaciers, river Bhagirathi and streams, flora and fauna etc. are the great attractions for the pilgrims and tourists. This area falls in Gangotri National Park, which has been notified way back in 1989.

Pilgrimage and Tourism - Gangotri being the seasonal (temporary) town ship comes into activities during summer months. The town caters the needs of tourists and pilgrims. Most of the host communities come from nearby Dharali and Mukhba villages of district Uttarkashi. Earlier Gangotri was most suitable place for meditation and yoga due to its quietude, serenity, sublime climate and natural surroundings. First European to enter in this Himalayan kingdom was James Baillie Fraser, who visited the place in 1814. After reaching to Gangotri he himself writes, "We were now in the centre of the stupendous Himala, the loftiest and perhaps most rugged range of mountains in the world. We were at the acknowledged source of that noble river, equally an object of veneration and a source of fertility, plenty and opulence to Hindustan; and we had now reached the holiest shrine of Hindoo worship which these holy hills contain. These are surely striking considerations, combining with the solemn grandeur of the place, to move the feelings strongly. The fortuitous circumstance of being the first European that ever penetrated to this spot was no matter of boast, for no great danger had been braved, no extraordinary fatigues undergone: the road is now open to any other who chooses to attempt it, but it was a matter of satisfaction to myself." But now it has become crowded town with haphazard building construction, unplanned drainage system, massive tree felling, garbage and unorganized tourism / pilgrimage development.

This inappropriate tourism is not only restricted within Gangotri township, but has been badly expended up to Gaumukh (18 km from Gangotri) and nearby alpine areas like Tapovan and Nandanvan. The Bhojpatra (Birch) trees of Bhojbasa, which is 14 kms from Gangotri on the way to Gaumukh, have been ruthlessly cut for the fuel and timber requirements of the tourists, pilgrims and the hosts. Few old dead woods of Bhoj

(birch) remind the past glories. The beautiful Juniper bushes of Bhojbasa have been vanished. Now they can be seen on the higher reaches only.

Gaumukh, Tapovan and Nandanvan are the attractions for the pilgrims, trekkers and the mountaineers and therefore attract large number of pilgrims, tourists every year. Tapovan is the base camp for the climb of many snow covered peaks- Shivling, Bhagirathi I,II,III, Meru, Satopanth, Baby Shivling and Kedar dome etc. Gaumukh is the place from where river Bhagirathi emerges from the snout of 28 km long Gangotri glacier. Therefore, the place is treated as most sacred for Hindus. Bhagirathi is the perennial and the main tributaries of river Ganga.

Negative Impacts of Pilgrimage and Tourism - Lack of scientific development and planning have converted Gangotri, a beautiful place into ugly hill town. Few prominent negative impacts like deforestation, ugly building construction, garbage heaps, pollution of water bodies, shifting of tree line, disappearance of certain flora species and loss to the economy and ecology are very prominent negative impacts in the area. According to the scientists the snout of Gangotri glacier is receding on an average 15-20 meters per annum. Recession of the glacier on this alarming rate will make it disappear very soon. No doubt the global warming might be one of the reasons, but regional impacts cannot be denied. Destruction of forests is not simply the loss of trees and bio diversity problem but it accelerates the economic and cultural losses, too. Therefore, the idea of sustainable tourism or ecotourism has been introduced world over. Sustainable tourism has the capability of being a feasible tool for biodiversity conservation by providing economic alternatives for communities to engage in other than destructive livelihood activities, creating new revenue streams to support conservation through user fee systems and other mechanism, building constituencies that support conservation priorities by exposing tourists, communities and governments to the value of protecting unique natural ecosystems. There is an overall need to develop effective inter-sectorial mechanism that will ensure the harmonious interaction among all the stakeholders and a symbolic linkage between biodiversity conservation planning and tourism development.

Temple of Gangotri used to be the only construction at Gangotri. Today a big haphazard township has come into existence. Process of unplanned development has killed the very aesthetics of Gangotri Township. Fraser's description of, "birch thriving remarkably" in Gangotri is the evidence of the suitable climate for birch at Gangotri in year 1814, which has been witnessed by Late Shri Hari Krishan Raturi in Kedar Ganga valley in 1953, which has been completely vanished in Gangotri today. This complete disappearance of the birch, in just 68 years is bad omen for the biodiversity and gene pool of that area. Once most beautiful place for meditation and yoga, Gangotri, due to its quietude, sublime climate and natural surroundings, has now become overcrowded and over used township. Haphazard and un-aesthetic building construction, unplanned drainage system, massive tree felling, garbage trails and unorganized tourism/ pilgrimage have spoilt the beauty of Gangotri. This practice is not restricted within the Gangotri town-ship but has been extended to Bhojbasa, Gaumukh and Tapovan also.

Tapovan is situated at an altitude of 4290 meter and is just 4 km from Gaumukh. This alpine pasture land has many unauthorized constructions to cater the needs of tourists/pilgrims. From Gangotri to Gaumukh and beyond comes in the reserve forest area of Gangotri National Park. But here, tourism and pilgrimage has come up in very haphazard manner. This resulted in destruction of rare flora and fauna of this fragile

Himalayan high land. Tourism was introduced in the seventh decade of last century as smoke less industry with no harm but very soon this gave scars on the face of mother earth.

Plantation and Ecological Conservation work-

We developed plant nursery at an altitude of 3471 meter in Chirbasa, which is 14 km from Gangotri on the way to Gaumukh. Saplings of Birch, Salix, Blue pine and four medicinal herbs were raised in 1995.

Firstly, we planted 2500 Birch and Salix trees at Bhojbasa at an altitude of 3810 meter in 1996 in 2.5 hectares of area and later in 1997 onwards planted 12500 saplings of birch at an altitude of approximately 3900 meter.

We raised the issue of garbage menace and started garbage cleaning for the very first time in 1989 and we organised Eco-awareness campaigns.

What was the Impact of our work?

More NGOs and groups came forward to plant the trees.

Many garbage cleaning expeditions are organised by people now.

Garbage bins are installed by the Forest Department, all along the 18 km long trek and other trek routes.

Other INGO & NGOS also attempted tree plantation in this area.

Conclusions-Unplanned tourism and pilgrimage is very harmful. But systematically planned tourism is very much required for the betterment of economy, ecology and the local people. Tourism development should be done in planned and scientific manner.

### **Carolina Adler – UIAA Mountain Protection Commission and Mountain Research Initiative**

The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) was founded in 1932 and has a global presence on six continents representing 90 member associations and federations in 67 countries.

The UIAA promotes the growth and protection of mountaineering and climbing worldwide by:

- preserving their spirit and traditions
- advancing safe and ethical mountain practices
- promoting responsible access, culture and environmental protection
- supporting youth participation and the Olympic movement

The protection of the mountain environment has always been a chief concern for the UIAA. Today that commitment is as strong as ever. From its very earliest years, UIAA members were active in opposing schemes like the construction of cable cars and railroads in the Alps. Later the focus turned to issues like the problem of visitors leaving behind waste in the mountains, pollution from tourist flights and the use of helicopters to access remote areas.

The UIAA believes all those who have a stake in the well-being of the mountain environment should collectively work to raise awareness about the fragile nature of the mountain ecosystems, as well as to encourage responsible and sustainable behaviour and practices.

**The UIAA's activities focus on:**

- Promoting sustainable mountain regions development and rewarding innovative initiatives in adventure tourism and mountain conservation.
- Raising awareness about environmental issues and furthering education on mountain preservation and sustainable practice.
- Supporting concrete actions taken by our federations that aim to preserve the mountain environment in its natural state.
- Encouraging the adoption and respect by all of international declarations, including UIAA's own ethical guidelines, in order to preserve mountain ecosystems and cultures.
- Liaising with international organizations on access and conservation issues and providing assistance, when requested, to member federations on such issues within their own countries.

The UIAA's work in this field is supported by the Mountain Protection and Access commissions and through core projects like the annual Mountain Protection Award and Respect the Mountains series as well as international advocacy on behalf of its members, presence at major international summits and conferences, and activity around the annual 11 December International Mountain Day.

### **Ana Agustina Barros - Caring about mountains: sharing knowledge and good practices to protect them**

We all know that mountains matter but do we know why are they threatened?

- Climate change
- Unsustainable agriculture
- mining
- Unplanned urbanization
- Lowland water demand
- Biological invasions
- Land use degradation from tourism & recreation

But how hiking and mountaineering can damage?

- Trampling on sensitive ecosystems
- Polluting pristine waters when camping
- Not packing out
- Introducing new species when driving, walking & fishing
- Accidental wildfires
- Not respecting local cultures
- Many others...

So...How can we protect mountains?

Leave no trace practices (example is Play Clean Go)

Getting involved and inspiring together.

## **Alessandra Segantin – International Mountain Leader**

Hello everybody, and thanks a lot for being here. My intention with this small presentation is to bring the focus and think about the the role mountain guides can have in educating clients (and themselves) about mountain protection, especially during times of intense mountain “rediscovery” during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During my first year working as a guide in Iceland I remember I was told by a colleague that we, the guides, were not supposed to have the role of educators. I remember that immediately my stomach started to burn because I couldn't have agreed less. Working as a guide, I always felt the responsibility of being a vector of a message, not just a “controller”

Many times I had to argue with my clients because of something apparently not extremely significant such as an orange peel. No matter if I was in South America, some parallels under the arctic circle or on a path in the mountains of Northern Italy, I always noticed that almost all of my clients used to believe that throwing fruit peel in nature was something ok, a normal and perfectly tolerable attitude. “It's organic trash, it just goes back to nature!” That's the way they normally justify their behaviour.

And that's in some way true, we are not talking about throwing a candy wrapper into a bush.

But the thing is that clients normally don't know the difference between the “nature” and “ecosystem”. So what I always try to do is explaining that an orange, normally grewed in a warm, sunny, humid environment, has absolutely nothing to do with a high altitude alpine zonation, where the decomposition process is very long (may be years) and once it's done, it may cause a considerable change to the PH of the floor. So basically what we are generating is just simple trash. And I also have to tell them that no, deers don't eat orange peels.

And what if every single hiker would act in the same way: we would have to hike among thousands of used tissues, banana peels, nut shells and cigarette butts.

Sometimes we just are not aware of the consequences our travels may have on the environment and local culture because we simply ignore them. And we need to be educated.

And this is maybe what happens to the thousands of people who suddenly discover the beauty and healing power of being in the mountains last summer.

Having been “locked down” for months caused a tremendous increase in the desire to be outdoors. Despite all the complications in travelling, the summer of 2020 have celebrated an unseen, intense, uncontrollable rediscovery of our mountains and mountain activities. Despite all the expectations, mountain guides had a very busy summer. I've worked in a mountain hut very close to the Marmolada glacier and I've seen some guides reaching the top of the mountain with clients even 4 times a week. Were those guides aware of their role of educator? Were they aware that the hours their clients have spent with them were crucial for them to develop a deep knowledge and awareness about the fragility of the ground they were stepping on? Did they know they were the only persons who could educate them about the impact of their outdoor activity? So what should mountain guides do in this scenario?

Sometimes my work was simply to chat with my clients, and exchange opinions just to reach an agreement in order to let them enjoy their holiday, learn something new and limitate our impact. On several occasions I didn't just have to "tell them" but literally had to "explain them why" and also "convince them", and that's the part of the guide acting as an educator.

Just to give you an example: when I was working as a hiking guide in Tierra del Fuego, I used to invite my clients to put their trash inside a small plastic bag I used to give them. They were very surprised that I wanted them to carry their rubbish (especially fruit peel or toilet paper) al day long. When the moment for a toilet break came, I used to suggest them to go to a place that I knew was literally covered in toilet paper, inside the wood. I knew they would come back with a very sad, disgusted face...and of course, their toilet paper inside the trash bag.

In my personal experience, none of the guides I've hired or the mountaineering instructors I've had in the past ever told me about the impact I can generate on the alpine environment with a simple activity such as hiking. I'm not saying that I am the best guide in the world, I'm a long way from that, but just that I had the chance to have good teachers during my professional training.

My aim is to bring attention to the fundamental educational role mountain guides must have with their clients, especially in the next months and years.

Lastly, I would like to underline the need for each guide to be curious, sensitive and willing to be educated in the first place about environmental conservation and leave no trace practices, so that we can communicate that to our clients.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE “WE ARE NATURE: MOUNTAIN WOMEN COLLECTIVELY DEFENDING THE EARTH” WEBINAR FOR EARTH DAY

Please join us for a month of ‘Leave No Trace’ in May

Sign up here: [www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org](http://www.mountainwomenoftheworld.org)

*The mountain unites us. Together we transform!*

WE ARE NATURE:  
MOUNTAIN WOMEN COLLECTIVELY DEFENDING THE EARTH  
Webinar for Earth Day, 22 April - 13:00 to 15:00 UTC

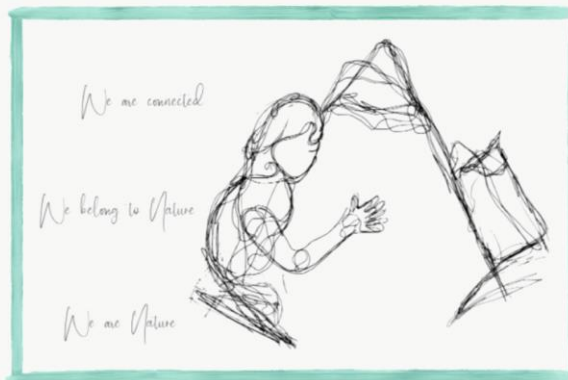
As part of the Mountain Women of the World project we are hosting a Webinar for Earth Day, led from a transnational network of mountain women. It will be a space for groups of mountain women from around the world to share experiences and knowledge. The attendance to the Webinar is open upon registration.

The webinar will explore the following themes:

- Sharing experiences and practices for community-led mountain tourism grounded in mountain protection.

- Sharing practices to strengthen economic justice for mountain women, and sharing learnings and ideas on how mountaineering builds collective power and collective feminist leadership.

- Building collective mindfulness, collective healing and care.



- Sharing practices and knowledge for protecting the mountains and sharing experiences on how mountain women are impacted by climate change, and how we can strategise and create change together to protect the Earth.

- Create a safer space where we can learn from our collective experiences and mountain cultures, and share a call to action to organise together for International Mountain Day.

Organised by the project partners of Mountain Women of the World:

Empowering Women of Nepal, Feminist Hiking Collective, Kilimanjaro Women, las Cholitas Escaladoras de Bolivia, Mujeres a la Cumbre, 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking and Women Who Hike Africa. **With the participation of:** Alessandra Segantin, Alpine Community Economies Laboratory, Ana Agustina Barros, Bangladesh Mountaineering Federation, Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir, Club Alpino Italiano, Mountain Partnership, the UIAA - International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, South South Women, Topchu Art Group and Travolution.



International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation  
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME

Mountain Partnership

BMF

Laboratorio alpino per economiste di comunità

MOVIMIENTO MOUNTAIN WOMEN

TOPCHU ART GROUP

SOUTH SOUTH WOMEN

TRAVOLUTION

for info email:

[hello@feministhikingcollective.org](mailto:hello@feministhikingcollective.org)