THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

CONSERVATION. CULTURE. COMMUNITY.

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I joined the Board of The Mountain Institute (TMI) in 2010 because, as a native West Virginian, mountains are in my blood. I instinctively knew how critical they are for watersheds, as harbors of biodiversity and cultural heritage, and as sources of enjoyment and inspiration for countless people around the world.

What I didn't fully appreciate was how threatened many mountain communities are and how little was being done about it, with potentially consequences for all of us.

The Mountain Institute is unique in that it is arguably the only NGO working exclusively in mountain environments on a global scale. Whether in the Andes, the Himalayas, or in my own Appalachians, TMI has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals secure better futures for their families and communities, while at the same time protect local environments and cultures.

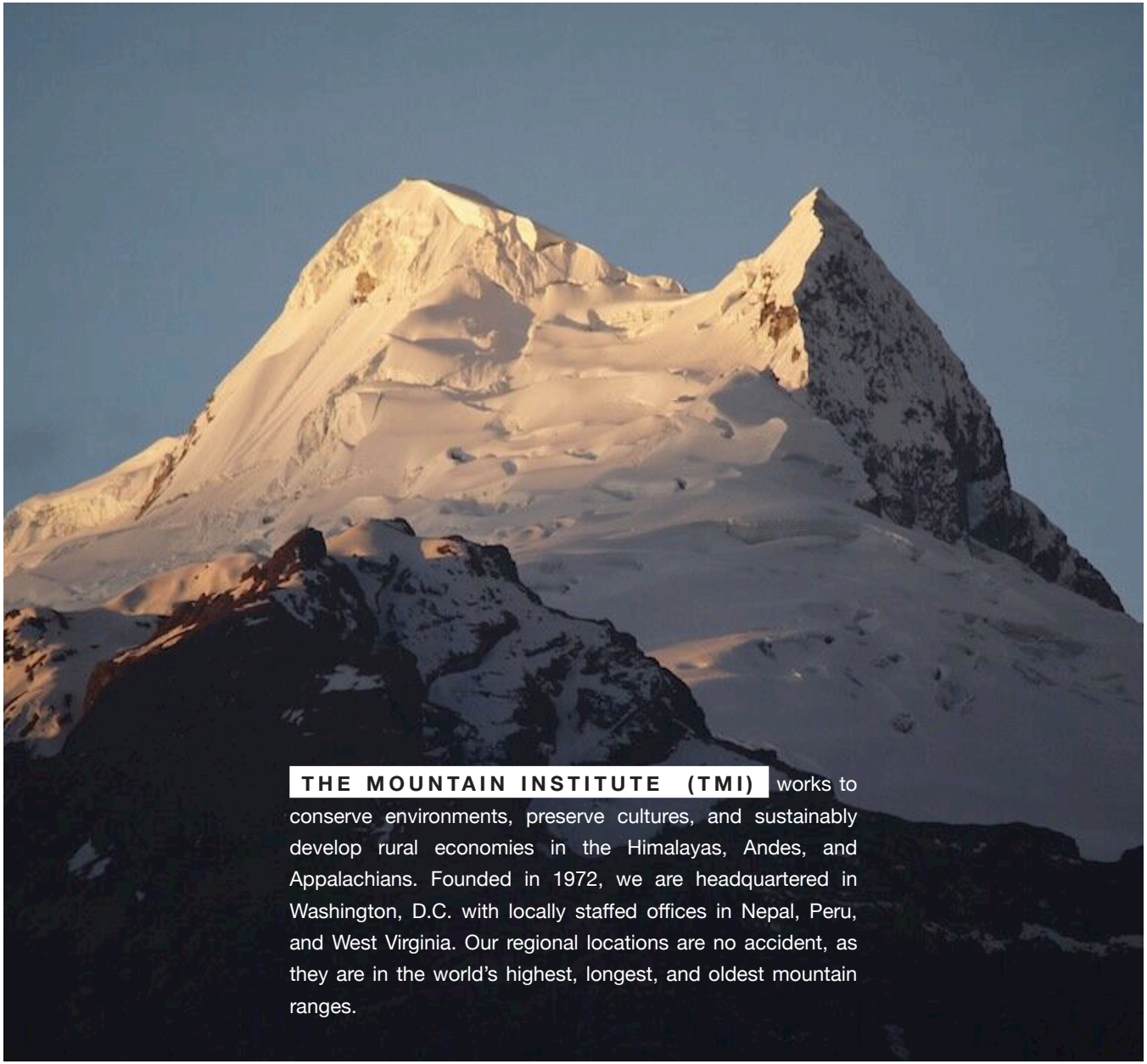
The mountain communities TMI serves face challenges that include poverty, accelerating climate change, cultural degradation, natural disasters, political unrest, water and food insecurity, and a broad range of environmental threats. Yet sadly, they are all too often neglected or even forgotten by their governments and international development organizations.

For more than 40 years, The Mountain Institute has worked with and in these communities to leverage local knowledge and experience to find solutions that have real impact. Our activities include development of sustainable livelihood options, such as the cultivation and sale of medicinal and aromatic plants, which have proven particularly successful in Nepal and Peru where a high percentage of participating farmers are women. They also include protecting mountain populations from the effects of climate change, such as the threat of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, or GLOFs, where artificial lakes formed by melting glaciers have in the past burst through their unstable moraines and devastated communities and farmland below. And they focus on the importance of education as an essential tool for helping the children of West Virginia and elsewhere expand their ability to create meaningful and satisfying lives.

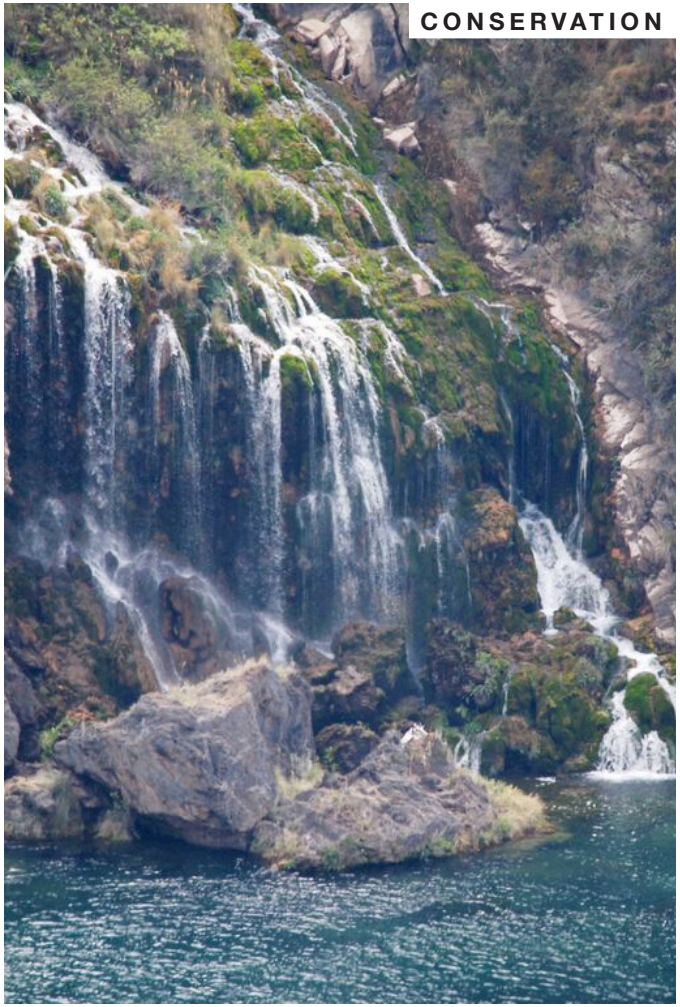
TMI's impact goes far beyond the immediate populations where we work. Mountains are the earth's water towers, providing up to 80% of the world's freshwater resources for domestic, agricultural, and industrial consumption. As just one example, rivers in Asia's Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain region alone supply freshwater to more than 1.3 billion people. Engaging mountain communities to help preserve the supply and quality of these water sources is a core TMI focus everywhere we work.

As I write, the world is still reeling from April's devastating earthquake in Nepal. The global response has been gratifying, and The Mountain Institute is privileged to be playing a key role in helping the remote villages we know so well recover. Our commitment to these communities remains strong, as it does to communities everywhere we work, and we pledge to remain there for them, and with them, for as long as we're needed. Please consider joining us.

Bill Beddow
Chair, Board of Trustees
The Mountain Institute



THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE (TMI) works to conserve environments, preserve cultures, and sustainably develop rural economies in the Himalayas, Andes, and Appalachians. Founded in 1972, we are headquartered in Washington, D.C. with locally staffed offices in Nepal, Peru, and West Virginia. Our regional locations are no accident, as they are in the world's highest, longest, and oldest mountain ranges.



CONSERVATION

Mountains supply over half of the world's freshwater. Nature's water towers are depended on to sustain terrestrial ecosystems as well as for domestic, agricultural, and industrial consumption. They are home to extraordinary species and vast landscapes, but also provide vital environmental services.

Global climate changes and human demands are increasing the role of local communities. TMI enables the stewards of these natural resources to fulfill their role, so crucial locally, but also for vast downstream human populations.

Appalachians: Across West Virginia in 2014, The Mountain Institute worked with over 200 local students to collect water quality data from streams in more than 20 separate surveys. The *Save Our Streams Program* of the State's Department of Environmental Protection used the data we entered into a volunteer monitoring database. It was utilized at the local and state level to inform decision making and priority setting for watershed restoration and protection. The state has praised the quality of our student collected data. This program is a great example of "citizen science" making a real contribution to a statewide environmental good—helping secure fresh water and aquatic biological diversity.

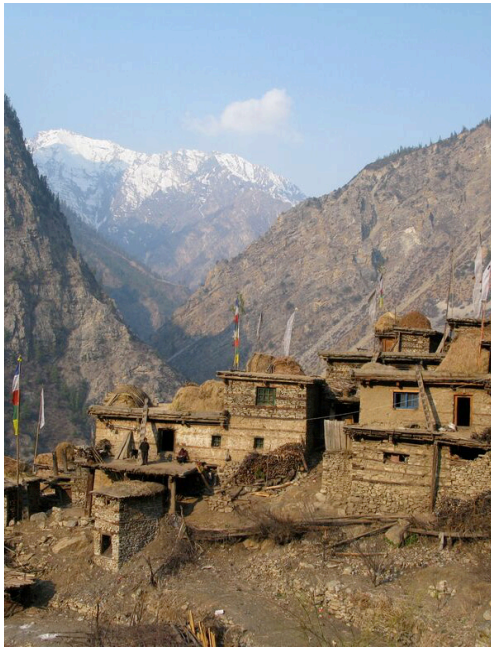
Andes: In 2014, our Andean Program cooperated with Peru's Agrarian University to support the Ministries of Environment, Economy and Finance. In conjunction with the latter we prepared protocols for assessing environmental health and ecological services that are provided by high-altitude wetlands, in addition to developing guidelines for public funds invested in the conservation of the aforementioned ecosystems.

In the Ancash Region of central Peru, the Institute supported surveys and research to assess risks and design an Early Warning System for potential Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) from the Palcacocha Lake, which threaten the city of Huaraz and its 120,000 human inhabitants. During 2014, four scientific and technical studies were published on issues related to reducing risks from this dangerous lake.

In the Piura Region of northern Peru, The Mountain Institute contributed to the protection of the Páramo ecosystem through providing support to eleven groups of farmers undertaking conservation activities. The Páramos are an endangered alpine wetland and grassland habitat extending from Peru to Venezuela that harbors tremendous biodiversity. It is a critical water source for Peru's heavily populated coastal lowlands, which are also economically important centers for agricultural production. Fully, 40% of the participants in the various support activities were women, evidence of how The Mountain Institute's programs engage both women and men to share knowledge and benefits.

In the Lima and Junín Regions of central Peru, the Institute continued its support for the National Park Service in the field of Ecosystem-based Adaptation. This is an innovative approach for increasing the resilience of ecosystems, hence communities, in response to environmental pressures such as climate change. Work undertaken included supporting the repair of community water reservoirs and the reconstruction of two canals, 2.8 and 3.0 km long. These contributed to the restoration of 4,000 acres of wetlands of importance for water birds, domestic livestock production, restoration of highland aquifers, and sustaining downstream water flow. Additional activities included the development of a community work plan to sustainably manage alpine grasslands.

Himalayas: In 2014, with financial support from the German Government, The Mountain Institute continued its work with the communities of the Rodikot and Dharma watersheds in the remote Humla District of Nepal's far west. This initiative focused on building local capacity for responding to climate change. Villagers from eight of the locations most vulnerable to climate change within these watersheds participated in the development of "community-based adaptation plans of action"—CAPAs. The Watershed User Groups, which we strengthened in each of the villages, were represented by a committee of both women and men, and included members from the most marginalized socio-cultural group—the Dalits or "untouchable" caste. The groups assessed their assets and vulnerabilities, and identified prospective solutions, adaptation strategies, and priority actions. Our work supported the implementation of one priority action in each of the eight villages with most activities focused on restoring springs and reducing risks from landslides. The Institute also supported information sharing and networking among Watershed User Groups, and with District level government and non-governmental agencies. This will help the communities access technical and financial help for implementing climate change adaptation plans in the future.



Retreating glaciers & climate change: In2014 The Mountain Institute's Science and Exploration Program, with the University of Texas in Austin, continued to lead the High Mountain Adaptation Partnership. This initiative aims to strengthen scientific, societal, and institutional capacity for climate change adaptation, resilient development, and disaster risk mitigation and management—especially for dangerous glacial lakes—in high mountain regions of Peru and Nepal. It also coordinates a global network of mountain scientists and practitioners from some 17 countries working on these and related topics.

This was a year for consolidation of the program's work focused on completing Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPAs) for the Khumbu region of Nepal, and in Ancash, Peru. These are highly participatory processes aimed at developing plans with mountain communities to help them mitigate risks from natural disasters and climate extremes, and adapt to climate change more generally. The process both helps educate mountain communities and prepares them to take action. It was also a year in which a number of important scientific journal articles were published on this work.

LIVELIHOODS

Mountain people around the world confront a diversity of paradoxes. Given the harsh environmental conditions to which they are adapted, traditional mountain communities are home to among the most innately resilient peoples. At the same time, government services and policies (typically designed by and for lowlanders) do not adequately take the needs of these isolated and often socioeconomically marginalized minorities into account. Finally, while the environments they live in are often rich in natural resources, mountain communities are globally some of the poorest. TMI's challenge is to find strong economic alternatives that, combined with wise investment and policy, can make such communities culturally vibrant and economically prosperous. One consequence is intense out-migration in many places, particularly by young men. This can create serious problems for those they leave behind.

Andes: The Ancash Region of Peru is already hard hit by climate change, glaciers are retreating, natural disaster risks are increasing from floods and avalanches, and precipitation is becoming less predictable. In terms of water, the challenge is frequently either too much or too little. Environmental degradation from these and other causes is severe in these fragile alpine habitats, often home to impoverished mountain communities.

In 2014 the Institute worked with various highland commonwealths to reduce the current and potential negative impacts of climate change. These commonwealths comprise from 2 to 10 local municipalities that collectively address local development and environmental management challenges. This enables them to pool technical help, plan for action over more ecologically coherent areas, such as micro watersheds, and access governmental funds. During 2014, 18 pilot initiatives were designed in collaboration with the commonwealths for implementation through 2017. Potential beneficiaries of this work include some 584,069 local people. These takes into account downstream populations who will have reduced flood risks and more stable year-round water supplies as a result, if this kind of work can be taken to scale.

In this region, we also supported the community of Canrey Chico in the Cordillera Blanca to design and build a low cost bioremediation system to purify water contaminated with metals—an increasing problem related to glacier retreat. This will benefit nearly 1,000 farmers directly. However, the model developed has potential for general application across the Andes. The Mountain Institute also assisted the Aquia and Huasta communities that live near the high altitude woodlands of the endangered quenual tree *(Polylepis spp.)*. With our help they developed economic alternatives to reduce pressure on these fragile habitats. In total, 20 families established nurseries to produce 15,000 trees per year, 15 families set up honey production businesses, and 20 women were trained in medicinal plant production and processing.

In the Piura Region of northern Peru, the Institute also supported 75 families in working together to improve the local economy while reducing pressure on the Páramos. Actions included introducing portable irrigation systems to improve pasture and thus milk production by 25%; 'true seed' technologies to increase potato yields by 35%, and the evaluation of 120 potato breeds and quinoa cultivars to select optimal varieties for the region. In total, 20 promising breeds of potatoes were identified along with one quinoa variety.

Himalayas: In 2014 The Mountain Institute continued its work with farmers on the cultivation as well as marketing of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) in the remote mountain districts of Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Sankhuwasabha, and Taplejung districts. In the high northern belts of the first three districts, we supported local NGO partners in the training of 531 new farmers (45% women). Each was provided with 200 grams of Chirata *(Swertia chirata)* seeds. The farmers made a cumulative commitment to utilize approximately 110 hectares of land, much of this previously degraded, to grow MAPs thus helping secure ecosystem services. In the eastern district of Sankhuwasabha, 323 new farmers (26% women) from the Upper Arun Valley were trained in MAPs cultivation and conservation. Each was provided with 300 grams of Chirata seeds. The farmers made a total commitment to utilize some 85 hectares of land for MAPs production. Additionally, 474 farmers received advanced training. Of the farmers previously involved in MAPS production in this area, 215 households sold mature plants. The latter earned a cumulative $54,300, with additional gains from the sales of cultivated Chirata seeds. In some cases this as much as doubled annual cash income of impoverished households.

A similar program was initiated in Taplejung district in 2014 with support from the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA). Here, 108 farmers (23% women) were given basic training in MAPs cultivation techniques. This focused on the following MAPs species: Chirata, Satuwa *(Paris polyphylla)* and Himalayan yew or Lothsalla *(Taxus wallichiana)*. Each farmer was provided with 200 grams of Chirata seeds. The farmers made a cumulative commitment to utilize 20 hectares for MAPs production. The Institute's work on MAPs not only contributes to increasing household income, but also provides considerable conservation benefits. The latter is achieved by reducing pressure on fragile habitats and wild plant populations. Of the various MAPS species, Himalayan yew is a conservation priority. It is the source for the anti-cancer drug taxol, but is also an endangered species on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List. Its international trade is governed by Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). To date, our work has resulted in the planting of over 250,000 seedlings of this plant to reduce pressure from wild collection.

In Sankhuwasabha, The Mountain Institute provided eco-tourism related training along a trekking route that has growth potential to attract more visitors. To enable more local people to benefit from tourism income we implemented a comprehensive capacity building program. Select lodge owners and homestay operators developed basic small business and tourism management skills. Those who attended the training formed a local Tourism Management Association. The institute also distributed back-boiler iron stoves to some of the lodge owners to reduce firewood consumption and unhealthy smoke production. In partnership with the Himalayan Stoves Project, 300 sets of improved stoves were distributed in Taplejung, Ilam and Sankhuwasabha districts.

PRESERVING CULTURE

Mountain communities, frequently made up of ethnic minorities, harbor thousand year old cultural traditions shaped by their natural environments. They are the stewards for structures (from temples to ancient forts), sites, and pathways of invaluable historical and cultural significance. Cultural preservation is of equal importance to environmental conservation and socio-economical development. Protecting cultural traditions and infrastructure has been a focus of The Mountain Institute since its founding.

Western US Mountains: In partnership with the Nuwuvi Nation (Southern Paiute) in Nevada, The Mountain Institute is assisting the US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the development of interpretative visitor centers and trails on public lands. This joint venture secures the protection of culturally important sites such as the Black Canyon Archaeological District in the Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge. We are also working to integrate the perspectives of Native Americans into the design and implementation of visitor facilities, and strengthen the engagement of native peoples in collaborative natural resource management on public lands in the American West. At the same time, this program is reinvigorating the Nuwuvi community by bringing young and old together at culturally important sites for traditional practices, such as the Pinyon nut harvest.

Himalayas: In 2014, The Mountain Institute continued to support the preservation of the 11th century Thubten Rinchenling Monastery in the remote village of Halji in the Humla district's Limi Valley, northwestern Nepal. Halji Gompa, one of the country's oldest monasteries, faced annual threats of flooding from an upstream glacial lake. Working with the 88 households of Halji village, we were able to reduce flood risks through the construction of 288 meters of gabion wall and an additional 155 meters of dry wall, reinforced by some 2,000 sand bags.

The US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation enabled us to restore the Monastery's roof. Leakage made the quarters below uninhabitable and damaged some of the ancient murals. The kitchen was also renovated, along with many of the rooms in the monks' quarters. This will greatly improve living conditions for this historic yet extremely isolated monastery. Promotional materials on the restoration work have been produced and handed over to the community for future fund raising.

Relatedly, during 2014 The Mountain Institute established a broader relationship with the Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. At the invitation of His Holiness, the Drikung Kyabgön Chetsang, we visited a program they were initiating in the Changthang region of Ladakh, India. Their Go Green-Go Organic program aims to address the economic, spiritual, and environmental needs of mountain communities up and down the backbone of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. While focused on followers of the Drikung Kagyu tradition, models for sustainable mountain development from this work will benefit mountain communities around the world. This year we made the connections for Go Green-Go Organic to join the U.N.'s Mountain Partnership, in addition to exploring a broader collaboration for livelihood and climate change adaptation work with remote mountain communities.

Andes: In the Andes of South America, The Mountain Institute collaborated with the Ecuadorian NGO EcoPar to publish a handbook on Ancestral Knowledge and Sustainable Forest Management.

EDUCATION

Appalachians: During 2014, The Mountain Institute maintained an experienced, highly trained staff to undertake educational stewardship activities, and plan for future growth to meet the needs of Appalachian communities.

Our field studies workshops provided innovative, hands-on learning to 50 middle and high school teachers. In addition, we undertook training for a further 210 teachers. Over the year, approximately 1,150 West Virginian students took part in programs at our Spruce Knob Mountain Center and in various schoolyards around the state. Another 4,500 students benefited from teacher participation in professional development training courses we offered as they extended their newfound knowledge and skills back to their own classrooms.

Every one of the 285 fifth grade students from the eleven elementary schools in the Randolph County school system in West Virginia participated in a two-day course focused on their local environment and culture. For more than a decade, we have operated this program as a supplement to classroom learning to get kids excited about the outdoors, and help them better connect with the natural heritage around them. In other activities, 47 teenagers participated in our new Mountain Trail Monitors program. Carried out in partnership with the US Forest Service, this program provides teenagers with the opportunity to learn about protected area maintenance and management in the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. In its inaugural year, the participants enjoyed forests, fields, streams, and mountain views; they worked together as a team to remove fallen trees and brush, maintain trails and trail markers, as well as monitor and manage erosion.

Andes: In Ancash, Peru, The Mountain Institute partnered with the Ministry of Education to develop five training modules and a video for the school system in mountain geography; glaciers, lakes and watersheds; the Huascaran Biosphere Reserve; and natural hazard risk management in mountain areas. During the year, we initiated a three-year program to increase the capacity of the local public university (Santiago Antunez de Mayolo National University—UNASAM). Seven students from the environmental studies faculty conducted internships with the Institute, two laboratories received support to develop business plans (in progress), and university professors received training in preparing research proposals on topics relevant to climate change.

Efforts to protect mountain environments and support mountain communities on a global scale are insufficient. During 2014, The Institute actively supported the sustainable mountain development agenda. In the most part through our membership with the Mountain Partnership, a United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of local people and protecting local environments around the world. It has governments, intergovernmental organizations, and many other organizations (e.g. civil society, NGOs and private sector) as members.

The Institute represents Global Civil Society on the Mountain Partnership's Steering Committee. Among actions during the course of the year we advocated at the United Nations to insure that mountain-relevant issues are integrated into the emerging Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are due to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the end of 2015.

PUBLICATIONS

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The notes to the financial statements are an integral part to understanding our Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position. While these note are not included in this annual report they are available in our fiscal year 2014 audited financial statements, which may be found on our website at THIS LINK: http://mountain.org/sites/default/files/attachments/tmi_2014_final_afs.pdf.

Statement of Financial Position		**September 30, 2014**
Assets		
	Cash and cash equivalents	$ 118,112
	Grants and contributions receivable	149,537
	Accounts and other receivables	145,382
	Prepaid expenses	13,339
	Investments	113,235
	Endowment investments	387,312
	Property and equipment, net	331,845
	Total assets	**1,258,762**
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities		
	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	161,789
	Deferred revenue	339,863
	Lines of credit	593,500
	Total liabilities	**1,095,152**
Net assets		
	Unrestricted	(651,290)
	Temporarily restricted	427,588
	Permanently restricted	387,312
	Total net assets	**163,610**
Total liabilities and net assets		**$ 1,258,762**

Statement of Activities **Year Ended September 30, 2014**

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue and support				
Grants and contributions:			-	
Government grants	$ -	$ 646,554	$ -	$ 646,554
Multilateral organizations	-	583,624	-	583,624
Private foundations	-	269,474	-	269,474
Other organizations	14,275	145,477	-	159,752
Consultants and contracts	500,608	-	-	500,608
Tuition and fees	335,597	330	-	335,927
Individual donations	272,553	37,430	-	309,983
Other income	26,839	8,347	-	35,186
Investment income	447	9,021	-	9,468
	1,150,319	**1,700,257**	**-**	**2,850,576**
Net assets released from restriction	1,702,874	(1,702,874)	-	-
Total revenue and support	**2,853,193**	**(2,617)**		**2,850,576**
Expense				
Program services				
South America	957,974	-	-	957,974
North America	689,416	-	-	689,416
Global	421,149	-	-	421,149
Asia	233,297	-	-	233,297
Total program services	**2,301,836**	**-**	**-**	**2,301,836**
Supporting services				
Management and general	452,841	-	-	452,841
Development and fundraising	58,404	-	-	58,404
Total supporting services	**511,245**	**-**	**-**	**511,245**
Total expense	**2,813,081**	**-**	**-**	**2,813,081**
Change in net assets	**40,112**	**(2,617)**	**-**	**37,495**
Net assets, beginning of year - as restated	(691,402)	430,205	387,312	126,115
Net assets, end of year	**$ (651,290)**	**$ 427,588**	**$ 387,312**	**$ 163,610**

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