



SMA

SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN ALLIANCE

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**

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## Introduction

The Sustainable Mountain Alliance (SMA) is a Swiss based non-profit association launched on World Tourism Day, 27 September 2021.

Our vision: to facilitate the transition to sustainable sports and tourism in the mountain environment.

Our mission: to provide a collaborative platform that identifies and supports inspirational, innovative solutions and a regenerative economy in the mountains, the most sensitive environment to climate change.

## SMA Challenges

The first SMA Challenge was made in **2022** on the topic of Air Quality with 9 Finalists identified including: Active Giving GmbH, ADD Swiss Sàrl, Airly, Camfil AB, Environmental Instruments, LuftSpektrum (VISDA project), Plair SA, Pluvo Ltd, Qaptis Sàrl. All winners received advisory support and were promoted in the Maison du Sport, Lausanne following the Challenge Finals.

## Sport for Nature Challenge 2023



In **2023**, the Sustainable Mountain Alliance, ThinkSport and the Sustainable Sport Lab launched the Sport for Nature Challenge, powered by Sails of Change, a foundation dedicated to the protection and regeneration of biodiversity, identifying innovative solutions that promote and enhance biodiversity conservation, with an actual or potential link with sport.

Protecting biodiversity can help people to adapt to climate change, ensuring health and food security, with healthy ecosystems becoming more resilient to climate change. Conserved or restored habitats can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping to address climate change by storing carbon. Ultimately, by halting and reversing biodiversity loss, a nature-positive world may be achieved by 2030 for the benefit of the planet and the people.

The Sports for Nature Challenge 2023 particularly called on innovative solutions relevant to the mountain environment, which is seriously affected by climate change and home to more than 85% of the world's species of amphibians, birds, and mammals, far exceeding the species diversity of the lowland.

Sports organisations, startups, established companies, not-for-profit organisations, academic and public institutions and other stakeholders were invited to submit solutions for the sports ecosystem within the following categories:

- Impactful **campaigns** that promote biodiversity protection, increase knowledge and help enforce legal and statutory biodiversity requirements.
- Innovative **infrastructure**, including architecture and infrastructure that integrate biodiversity protection, e.g. recovering rainwater; reducing waste water; building green rooftops; providing sustainable drainage systems; and phytoremediation using plants and its microorganisms to enhance soil fertility and recover contaminated soils.
- Smart **technology**, including the application and promotion of digital solutions for biodiversity conservation, and the use of satellite data and artificial intelligence for biodiversity protection.

The Challenge was closely linked to the Sports for Nature Framework, which was agreed to at the Convention on Biological Diversity 15th Conference of the Parties meeting (COP15) in December 2022 in Montreal. Co-created by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Sports for Nature Framework aims to deliver transformative action for nature across sports, by 2030 and beyond.

Over 70 applicants were received, with 44 from Europe, 1 from Oceania, 4 from Asia, 11 from America, and 10 from Africa.

An expert panel composed of Sails of Change co-founders [Dona Bertarelli](#), [Marie Sallois Dembreville](#), IOC Director of Corporate Development and Sustainability and [Dr. Radhika Murti](#), Director of the Centre for Society and Governance at IUCN, judged the ten finalists who in turn received CHF 50,000 and advisory support.

## Finalists

### Category 1. Campaigns

Winner:



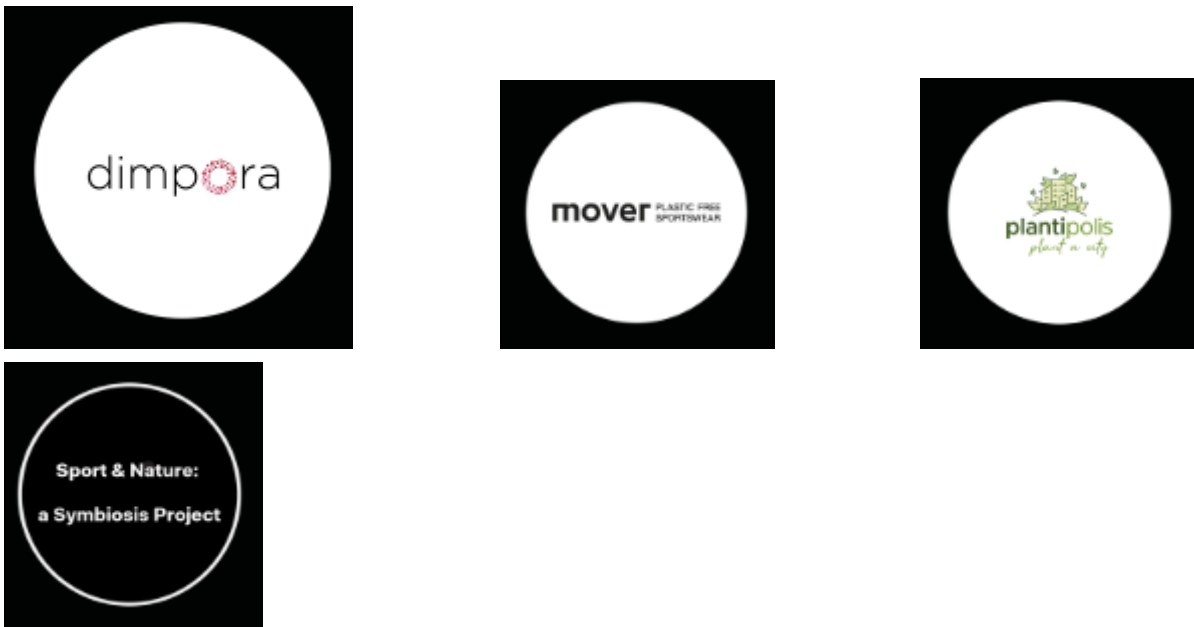
## Category 2. Infrastructure

Winner:



## Category 3. Infrastructure

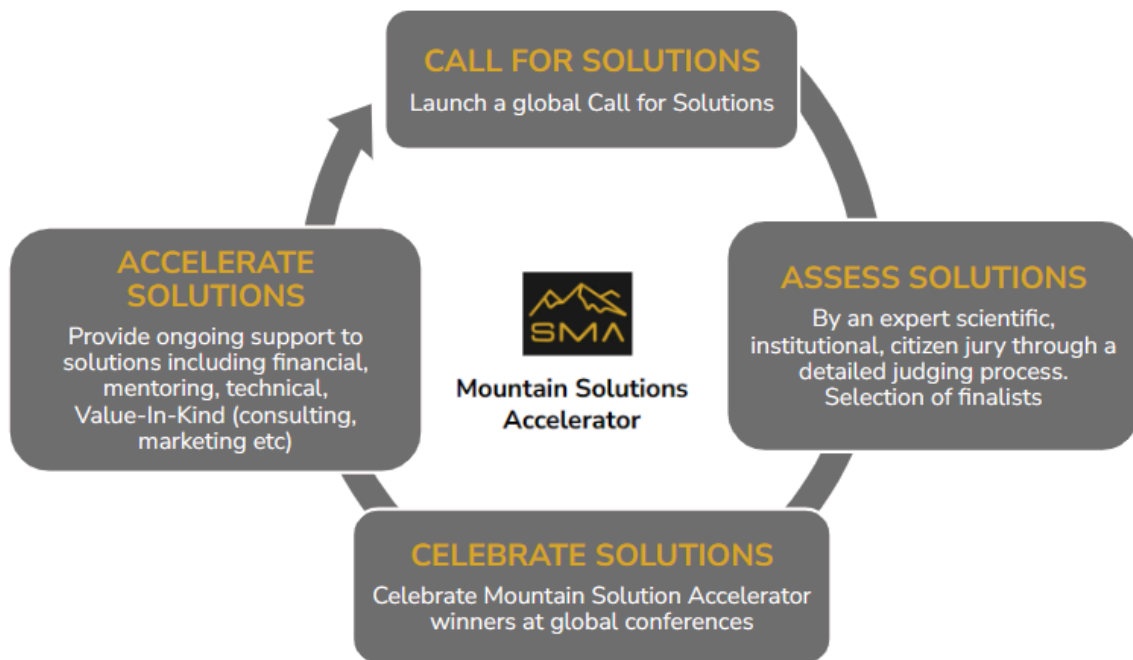
Winner:



## MOUNTAIN SOLUTIONS ACCELERATOR

In 2023, the Mountain Solutions Accelerator was conceptualised, building on the success of the previous SMA Challenges. The Mountain Solutions Accelerator aims to **identify, assess, celebrate** and **invests** in **Solutions** to climate change that:

- **conserve the mountain ecosystem,**
- **reduce greenhouse gas emissions,**
- **whilst advancing a regenerative sports and tourism economy.**



In 2024, it is intended that the Mountain Solutions Accelerator will be publicly launched.

## SPORT AND TOURISM PROGRAMME

### Sustainability Consultancy

Sustainability consultancy support continues to be provided by SMA Partner, The SHIFT, a Swiss based company specialised in providing sustainability advice and guidance to organisations globally with a specific focus on mountain based sports and entities. In 2023, expertise was provided to the following international mountain sports events and federations:



### The Big Climb



The Big Climb Kilimanjaro 2023 took place from 31st of July to 6th of August 2023 focusing on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), within science and exploration, and society at-large. Climbers took the 7-day Rongai route,



reaching the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro (5895m) on 5 August 2023. To underline its mission, The Big Climb partnered with The Explorers Club, Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU), Fjällräven Hanwag - Outdoor Footwear, UNFCU Foundation, PDAid Foundation Association, and the Marangu Hotel, Kilimanjaro. The Big Climb supported ten sponsored youth from Tanzania, Kenya, and New York to undertake an Outward Bound Course prior to undertaking the climb. By climbing as one, we can together push back on social boundaries and overcome adversity!



The Big Climb Kilimanjaro 2023

### Renewable Energy for Marangu Hospital, Tanzania

Over the past few years, The Big Climb has worked closely with the Marangu Hospital who have looked after some of our climbers who have had medical issues on the mountain. In 2022, with the support of Kilimanjaro Initiative USA, solar panels were installed on the hospital roof that has saved 40% of the annual electricity bill and they can now perform operations without the fear of power cuts.

For The Big Climb, climbing Mt Kilimanjaro is more than reaching the summit of Africa. It's about contributing to the communities that welcome us on the mountain. As part of The Big Climb 2023, in partnership with the hospital and Marangu Rotary Club, free medical consultations were provided to the residents of Marangu a day before our climb.

### Education Opportunities



The Big Climb also supports the local community through various engagement activities. Glory Minja is the daughter of Elijah Minja, who was The Big Climb's Chief Guide for many years. Her mother Jackline also climbed Mt Kilimanjaro with The Big Climb. Both have sadly passed away.

In their honour, and in honour of all the people who help The Big Climb up the mountain, we have been sponsoring Glory's studies. In 2024 she will be starting her second year at the Tanzanian Institute of Accounting.

### **Community Programme, Kiberia, Nairobi**

The Swiss Ambassador to Tanzania, Didier Chassot, climbed Mt Kilimanjaro in 2021 followed by The Big Climb Nepal in 2022 where he trekked to Everest Base Camp with UNESCO and our local partners. In 2023, the ambassador visited a project established in Kibera, Nairobi 7 years ago, the Trinity Boxing Club, meeting with those who have been engaged with The Big Climb since its establishment. The Trinity



Boxing Club provides a lifeline to many youth living in Kiberia with The Big Climb working closely with the community to identify and support youth who then participate in the annual climb.



## SCIENCE TO ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

### SIEPPUR - Sustainable Snow Management Project



In collaboration with the International Biathlon Union (IBU), Peak 63, the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), Svenskt Skidskytte AB (SSAB), the Polish Biathlon Association (PZB), the Slovenian Ski Association (SZS), the SMA is the communications partner for the SIEPPUR Sustainable Snow Management Project. The project is funded by the European Commission and will run from 2023-2025.

#### Objectives

The SIEPPUR project is dedicated to **identifying, developing and promoting sustainable practices in snow management** from production, storage, transport, grooming to handling. Coordinated by the International Biathlon Union (IBU), the project aims to:

- increase **awareness** about sustainable snow management;
- spread **solutions** to the snow sport sector to encourage pursuit of resource optimisation and efficiency objectives;
- provide practitioners with helpful **management tools** and **techniques** to monitor and minimise water and energy use and to
- **optimise the efficiency** of snow management, whilst
- **reduce impact on flora and fauna** from both short-term (daily) and long-term (climate change) perspectives.

#### Methodology

The SIEPPUR project follows the following methodology:

- Initial assessment of current practices in 10 carefully selected snow sports venues from diverse snow climatological environments
- Gap analysis
- Identification of best practices for minimising resource use and improving sustainability governance in snow sport organisations

## Outcomes

- Development of new knowledge to advance the different dimensions of sustainable snow management practices of: production, storage, transport, grooming, handling
- Implementation roadmaps for different cultural and geographical situations.
- Toolkits

## ZERO Project ‘Zero Emission Ride Objective’



The SMA supports the ZERO Project ‘Zero Emission Ride Objective’ in collaboration with the World Snowboard Federation, Protect Our Winters (POW) and Sport and Sustainability International. The 36-month project involves research, advocacy and sport professionals from 11 partner organizations and from 9 different countries. The project aims to develop innovative practices of grassroots snowboarding to increase accessibility and participation of young people in sport activities while empowering them in the fight against climate change toward ‘zero emission rides’.

## SUSTAINABLE LUXURY PROGRAMME

The objectives of the programme ‘Sustainable Luxury by the SMA’ are:

- To facilitate the shift to responsible, sustainable luxury solutions within the mountain environment through identification of committed, ethical and sustainable luxury products and partners from within the sport and tourism sectors.
- To act as a catalyst to promote societal change, influencing behavioural norms of what is desirable, typical or expected to enable the transition to Sustainable Luxury lifestyles and products in the mountain environment.



In April 2023, the SMA became a member of Positive Luxury’s Impact Network supporting SMA members in becoming Butterfly Mark certified. Independent and globally respected, Butterfly Mark certification is awarded to luxury brands, retailers and suppliers that meet the highest standards of verified ESG+ performance

## COMMUNICATION

The SMA website [www.sustainablemountainalliance.org](http://www.sustainablemountainalliance.org) is kept regularly updated with Press Releases and the SMA Instagram feed that is integrated into the website. A dedicated Linked’in page relays SMA related news.

Numerous outreach opportunities took place throughout 2023 included SMA’s participation at the The SPOT; Lausanne, Switzerland, May 2023; International Biathlon Union’s Snow Network Meeting, Laupheim, Germany September; Impulse Summit, St. Gallen, Switzerland November 2023; Host City Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, November 2023 as well as university lectures including at AISTS and the Sports Management School, Lausanne.



## GOVERNANCE 2023

### BOARD



**Anne-Cécile Turner**

*SMA Co-founder, Sustainability Expert*  
Specialist in systemic change and system-thinking approaches. Passionate about creating real change in the world. Leader in Water and Ocean preservation.



**Ingrid Beutler**

*SMA Co-founder, International lawyer, geographer and political scientist*  
Dedicated to protecting the mountain environment. Former elite cyclist. Expert in creating global sustainable change in sport, law and policy. Facilitator of partnerships, progress and innovation.



**Pierre Germeau**

*SMA Co-founder, Sport Industry specialist*  
Expert in Sustainability and Communication. Thinking outside the box since 20 years. Mountain addict since the last century



**Sarah Lewis OBE OLY**

*Global Sports Leader. Expert in Snow Sports working in the industry for 35 years.*  
Committed to making society better through sport. Olympian in alpine skiing. Passionate about enabling opportunities for future generations to experience the mountains as I have enjoyed.

### ADVISORS



**Ben Lesage**

*Global Coordinator at Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA)*  
Passionate about Mountains and the Oceans. Expert in technology and innovation. Worked for the innovation studio of BNP Paribas in San Francisco. Author of the first study dedicated to Ocean Technology startups.



**Cédric Girard**

*CEO of Global Sports Week*  
Supports sport leaders in their positive impact journey. Marketing leadership roles in the sports industry (Nike, Decathlon), consumer goods (Coca-Cola, Unilever) and hospitality (Louvre Hotels). Positive impact projects in Sport, Nutrition, Health and Innovation with MoHo, Schoolab, Fitnext and Publicis Sport.

## SMA MEMBERS

Since its establishment, the SMA has collaborated closely with numerous diverse stakeholders including civil society organizations, United Nations entities, governmental entities, academic institutions, international sports federations and international sports event organisers and their athletes.

The SMA Board agreed that, for the moment, a select group of diverse members contributing to achieving the mission of the SMA around the world would be invited to join the SMA.

Members are requested to sign the SMA Membership Commitment Form that serves as an ethical commitment to supporting the mission and vision of the SMA. The current members of the SMA include:

- Beauty Disrupted (beauty solution)
- Butterfly Help Project, Nepal
- Cirkel, Switzerland (ski clothing rental solution)
- Gear4Guides, Central Asia, Balkans and Georgia
- Kilimanjaro Trail Run (Red Knot Racing Co.), Tanzania
- Mira Rai Initiative, Nepal
- Nu Cycle, Amsterdam (waste solution)
- The Big Climb, Kenya
- Verbier Zero, Switzerland

In 2023, few new members were sought for SMA to ensure a focus on the continued development of the SMA programmes.

## FINANCES

The activities of the SMA are supported by the voluntary contributions of its Board and Advisors. Some limited funds are now available to support the SIEPPUR – Sustainable Snow Management project funded by the EU Commission.