

Vital legacy of gender specialist Paula Kantor

It is with deepest condolences that Milling and Grain magazine mark the tragic passing of International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) gender and development specialist Paula Kantor. Paula was featured in our April edition celebrating the ‘Superwomen of maize and wheat’.

Paula died on May 13, 2015 in the aftermath of an attack on the hotel where she was staying in Kabul, Afghanistan.

“We extend our deepest condolences to her family, friends and colleagues,” said Thomas Lumpkin, CIMMYT’s director general.

“Paula’s desire to help people and make lasting change in their lives often led her into challenging settings. Her dedication and bravery was much admired by those who knew her and she leaves a lasting legacy upon which future research on gender and food security should build.”

A US citizen, Paula joined CIMMYT as a senior scientist (gender and development specialist) in February 2015 to lead an ambitious new project aimed at empowering and improving the livelihoods of women, men and youth in important wheat-growing areas of Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Pakistan.

“Paula was such a caring, committed, energetic and talented colleague,” said Olaf Erenstein, director of socio-economics at CIMMYT. “She inspired everyone she worked with – and it’s so sad that her life and career were prematurely ended. She will be sorely missed – our deepest sympathies to her family, friends and colleagues throughout the world.”

At the time of her death at age 46, Paula had many years of experience in the area of gender and social



development. She was a respected professional and prolific writer, having published more than a dozen peer-reviewed academic publications, some 10 peer-reviewed monographs and briefs, 15 other publications and 10 conference papers during her lifetime.

Dynamic Career

Before joining CIMMYT, Paula served as a senior gender scientist with CGIAR sister organization WorldFish for three years from 2012, working in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Egypt.

“It is such a tragic, shocking waste of a remarkable talent,” said Patrick Dugan, WorldFish deputy director general and CRP AAS Director.

For two years previously, Paula had worked at the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) in Washington, D.C., developing intervention research programs in the area of gender and rural livelihoods.

From 2008 to 2010, Paula was based in Kabul, working as director and manager of the gender and livelihoods research portfolios at the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), an independent research agency.

After earning a doctoral degree focused on international economic development and gender from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2000, she taught in the Departments of Consumer Science and Women’s Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“Paula was a pillar in our gender work and a dear friend to many of us,” said Lone Badstue, CIMMYT gender specialist.

“It was a privilege to work with her. She had a strong passion for ensuring that her work made a difference. It’s hard to imagine how to move forward, but I’m convinced that Paula would want us to do that and to make the difference for which she strived.”