

Tammy Chen

2015-2016 CCSF Scholar

PhD Development Studies, University of Cambridge

The CCSF was devastated to hear that Tammy Chen was one of two Canadians killed in a terrorist attack in Burkino Faso, August 2017. This profile, written in 2016, highlights her academic achievements and charitable work.

Another African terrorist attack in mid January 2016, this time in Burkina Faso: 28 dead, among them nine Canadians. My mind raced to Tammy Chen, a CCSF scholar completing field research in Burkina Faso for her doctoral thesis in Development Studies at Cambridge. A quick

note from Tammy assured me that she was safe with family in Toronto, but devastated at losing colleagues and friends who were teachers, researchers, aid workers and missionaries.

I met Tammy on a blustery day in December 2015 shortly after she had returned to Cambridge from Africa. Her research has focused on tackling practical issues relating to poverty reduction and dynamics among multigenerational female family groups. Her greatest challenge is to identify the chronically poor, usually women, and why their lives have not improved. Is it because of lack of opportunity, being at the bottom of the production ladder where men take over the collection, marketing and selling on of their efforts, or is it partly because of the lack of confidence shown by the women themselves? Her goal is essentially to develop a multidimensional method that can identify different groups of poor people and further understand the challenges and barriers that cause people to stay poor or descend into poverty.

Tammy was educated in Montreal with a B.Ed. from McGill in 2007 with a Quebec teaching licence. A Queen's University M.Ed. was followed by three years teaching in the Ontario French immersion system. Her interest in international

development education was awakened by a challenging summer volunteer stay in a rural village in Burkina Faso. On return she established her own Canadian charity 'Bright Futures of Burkina Faso' a non-profit organisation promoting education and micro-finance projects in Burkina Faso. It continues its work today with support from Toronto middle and elementary schools.

A three-month internship in 2013 with The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome honed Tammy's skills in research and presentation. She currently holds an appointment as project leader for the FAO on women's empowerment in the shea nut industry in Burkina Faso, a report to be submitted in early 2016.

In 2013 she applied to Cambridge for PhD studies. Her proposed thesis topic 'Generational Poverty: A Gendered Approach to Effectively Targeting the Poor' has been enthusiastically supported by Dr David Clark, her Cambridge Supervisor who says that "Tammy's innovative research methods will produce an outstanding PhD thesis. Few students are more likely to leave their mark on the world."

Tammy Chen is an outstanding academic. Using a collaborative approach to her research, again and again she has shown leadership in her commitment to international development. She is a marvellous example of students worthy of the support from the Canadian Centennial Scholarship Fund.

Julia Montgomery, CCSF Trustee, February 2016



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