

AREU mourns the tragic loss of former director Paula Kantor.



Xochil Fonseca/CIMMYT

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the tragic loss of Dr. Paula Kantor in the aftermath of an attack at the Park Palace Hotel on Wednesday, May 13, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

“Paula gave her life here - like many other selfless heroes - to make sure millions of people, especially women, get a chance at a better life. She was aware of the risk she was taking to serve in conflict and terrorist-affected places. While we grieve her loss, we shall never forget the cause she gave her life to,” said Nader Nadery, director of AREU.

Paula was an integral and beloved member of AREU and the Kabul community. She had just returned to Kabul for a short period after a five-year absence to begin work on an ambitious new joint research project between AREU and CIMMYT to empower and improve the livelihoods of women, men and youth in wheat-based systems of Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Pakistan.

Paula first came to AREU in 2005 as a senior researcher in gender and livelihoods, where her work focused on social issues and was driven by her desire to make a difference in peoples’ lives. She published prolifically while at AREU and was particularly interested in the connections between gender and poverty reduction. Additionally, her research touched on other critical social issues such as migration, jobs, micro-credit and micro-finance and child labour.

In 2008 Paula became director of AREU and stayed until 2010, when she left Kabul to pursue a new opportunity at the International Center for Research on Women as their senior rural development specialist. She then worked at the WorldFish Center for two years before becoming a senior scientist in gender and development for the International Maize and Wheat Centre, or CIMMYT, in February 2015.

After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in 1990, Paula went on to earn an MA in Gender and Development from the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University in England. After receiving a doctoral degree in City and Regional Planning in 2000 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she taught at the University of Wisconsin’s Madison campus for several years in the Consumer Science and Women’s Studies departments before taking up the research position at AREU.

Out of appreciation of Paula’s life and friendship, and with a deep respect for her work, the Gender Studies Center that AREU plans to establish from its Gender Unit will be named in her honour. In this way Paula’s commitment to her work and to the Afghan people will never be forgotten.

Our sympathies and best wishes go to her family during this difficult time.

