

Harvard girl finds roots in China

Chinese-American works on microfinance project in rural areas

By YU NAN
China Daily staff

With a simple but tasteful dress, big, bright eyes and long black hair, Sarah Tsien looks no different from any other Chinese girl when she walks the streets of Beijing.

No one actually realizes she is not a native of China unless they hear her still slightly stilted Chinese.

The 22-year-old only moved to Beijing from the Silicon Valley in the United States after she graduated from Harvard University in June this year.

Despite her youth, Tsien is Head of Mission with Planet Finance in China.

Planet Finance is an international non-government organization dedicated to eradicating poverty by using information technology and the Internet to develop microfinance worldwide.

Although Tsien grew up in California, she seems to have easily adapted to life in Beijing. She is now used to bargaining with peddlers, riding a bicycle to her office and eating hot pots in cheap but good restaurants, she said.

"I don't understand China sometimes. I am still learning," Tsien said modestly in English.

Few can understand her motivation for working in a place so faraway and unfamiliar.

But she said the reason was simple: "I feel like I belong here and this is the place where I've found my roots."

To be different

Sarah Tsien now has a Chinese name called Qian Xiangmin. She came from the same family as Qian Xuesen, who is a famous Chinese rocket scientist. Xuesen's brother, moved to the United States from Ningbo in East China's Zhejiang Province in the 1940s, studying in Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as his brother did.

Tsien's father is a famous professor of neurobiology at Stanford University and her mother is a professor of psychology with Pacific Graduate School for Psychology.

"I come from a long line of engineers and scientists. When I was in college, I decided that I didn't want to do that.

"I want to do something that has more to do with people, something outside the laboratory," Tsien said.

In June 2002, she got her bachelor's degree in economics and anthropology after conducting 10 months of field research on rural development and the financial needs of Chinese farmers particularly in Southwest China's Yunnan Province during 2000 and 2001.

Tsien travelled a lot in her school days. She has been to Ghana, Senegal, Russia, Mexico, India, Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand and all over Europe.

And the most interesting places she found were those in developing countries, especially China, she said.

"I really feel that China is a

place where so many things are happening and changing, and I would like to be part of that change," Tsien said.

Caring for the poor

The person who really aroused Tsien's interest in developing countries was an African woman from Cote d'Ivoire who lived with her when she was 14.

The woman used to take care of Tsien and her younger siblings while she studied in the United States. She told Tsien wonderful stories about her family which had altogether 14 children.

Tsien didn't understand why the woman had to leave a place where she was so happy and asked her why.

The woman's answers shocked the young Tsien — because Africa was poor and because the opportunities were few.

"How can this be — that money is scarce, education is underdeveloped, and there are no job opportunities and yet there is such a beautiful culture?" Tsien asked herself.

To learn more about research into and the practice of alleviating poverty, Tsien went to Africa in the summers of 1997 and 1999.

She worked for an international programme with local pre-school teachers. There, Tsien first touched on the idea of microfinance and realized how it could help the poor.

The project involved giving picture cards to rural families so parents could teach their children how to read Wolof (a local language) and French. It was so successful that it became a model for the country.

"It was one of the best times of my life," Tsien said.

She was asked by her colleagues in Africa what she knew about China.

"People asked me because I am a Chinese-American, but I really knew very little about China, which is quite a pity."

That's why Tsien decided to do an independent research-action project on microfinance in China in 2000, which was sponsored by a Pforzheimer Scholarship through Harvard.

She lived with local farmers in small villages in Malipo and Luoping counties in China's Yunnan Province for several months.

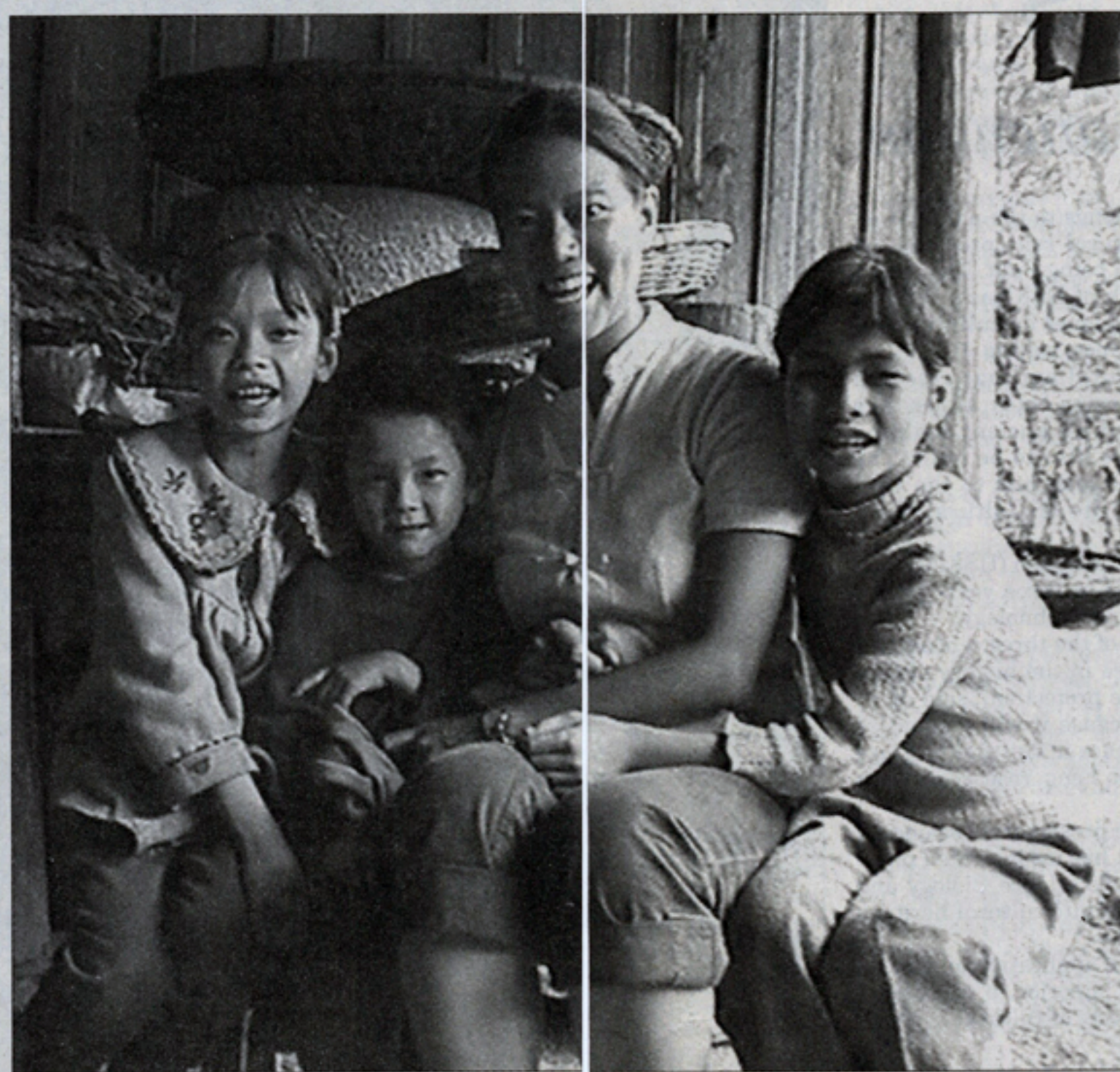
"The first thing I learned there was how to scramble through the pigpen in order to use the latrine outside the house," she joked.

However, it was in the village where Tsien learned how to survive illness and discovered what it meant to live in remote regions.

She still can't forget a woman she met in Luoping, who survived a serious head injury caused by a falling stone.

The woman, named Wang Jufen, bent in pain as the blood began to run between her fingers covering her head, recalled Tsien.

By 4 am, half the village was crowded around Wang's home, trying to comfort her.



Home away from home: Sarah Tsien and three children from a village in Luoping County, Southwest China's Yunnan Province, smile for the camera.

"There was nothing more we could do at that time," she said. "The nearest village doctor lived three hours by foot away, and the nearest hospital was seven hours by truck."

"That was the first time I learned the seriousness of what it meant to live in remote regions of the mountains. When life is in danger, it is truly at that moment that you discover what that means."

"Honestly, at first, I didn't come back for anything because I am an American," she said.

But as more and more people kept telling her that "her roots are in this place," she should come back, "If a communist's blood is something that belongs here, I would like to discover what that means."

"Now I am here in China and I know this is where I belong." In the eyes of Qiu Mei, her Chinese colleague working as outreach coordinator, Tsien is "bright, open-minded, well-organized and sensitive to people's needs and feelings."

"I think she came to China partly because she wants to find her Chinese roots and partly because she wants to do something good for China," Qiu said.

Technology can help

Growing up in the Silicon Valley, Tsien was inspired by how the big technology companies created new opportunities.

Her study of microfinance in college and her research trips convinced her that there was a way to solve the poverty problem.

Tsien and Planet Finance are now using technology and microfinancing to serve and resource the poor in China.

She said the microfinance loan officers at county-level were very diligent and close to the farmers. But she found they lacked information and opportunities for capacity building,

was where her hometown is. "I know they didn't mean America. They thought since I have a Chinese face I must have a Chinese hometown," Tsien said.

"I think the Internet can help them share information in this case," Tsien said.

Tsien has suggested that the loans officers get e-mail accounts, get onto the Web, and download documents through the Internet.

"That's exactly what Planet Finance is doing — networking microfinance projects all over China and giving them the chance to capacity build and obtain information."

"I wish more and more technology companies could pay more attention to China's rural technology needs, especially through microfinance projects."

Tsien has established the representative office for Planet Finance in China and is working with three Chinese colleagues to perfect a newly-built website — www.pfchina.org — which provides information about microfinance in China in both English and Chinese.

Tsien hopes to set up a non-profit organization on microfinance that will be truly Chinese in the future.

"I'm not sure how long it will take to turn the reins over to someone else, but I hope that this organization develops a kind of institutional sustainability that doesn't need to rely on foreign assistance."

"Someday I dream that this programme will be funded by Chinese for Chinese, and led by Chinese."

during her research trips in Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Henan and Hebei provinces.

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TODAY'S RADIO

FM 87.6 MHz (all stereo)
10:30 Music Zone
13:30 Concert Hall
16:30 Music Online
21:00 Liyuan Theatre

FM 97.4 MHz (all stereo)
12:30 Chinese Top 10
15:00 Around Russia
18:00 New Sound of Modern City
19:00 World Chart Show
21:30 World Movie Soundtrack

AM 828 kHz
06:30 News
07:50 Sports World
08:30 Times Magazine
14:30 Health Club
22:05 Life Hotlines

AM 603 kHz
08:30 Reading Time
10:00 Community & Life
18:00 Travel Guide
20:10 English pop songs

TODAY'S TELEVISION

CCTV-1
12:00 News 30 Minutes
13:05 Oriental Horizon
17:00 World Express
19:00 News; weather
19:38 Focus Interview
20:10 Cooking contest
22:00 World Reports
23:50 Man and Nature

CCTV-2
10:30 Road to Health
16:25 Stock Market
17:05 China Market Update
19:30 Business Report
20:00 Life
21:35 Economy 30 Minutes
23:25 Earth Stories

CCTV-3
19:30 Stage
21:35 Art Scope: Local opera
22:40 Late News

CCTV-4
15:05 Across the Straits
19:05 Discovery
20:05 China Showbiz
21:30 China Report

CCTV-6
14:56 Spanish movie
16:52 Chinese movie: Ah Fu's Romance

18:46 Animation World
19:45 Memorable Moments
21:46 European Cinema: Italian movie

CCTV-8
17:36 TV and Movie Club
18:10 Children's Theatre
19:00 World Culture Square
20:02 Prime Time Theatre
21:48 Jiayi drama

22:48 Late-night Theatre: Dream River (8)

CCTV-9
10:30 Around China
16:15 Shanghai Today
19:00 World Wide Watch
21:30 Centre Stage

BT-1
11:30 Beijing Express
12:30 Capital Economy Report
17:25 Stock Market
18:30 News; weather
19:53 Serial: The Winter Is Not Cold (21, 22)
21:48 Sports Report
22:45 Hello the World

BT-2
19:38 Serial: Story of Qinhuai River (19, 20)
21:48 Dreams Come True
22:46 International Cinema: French movie

BT-3
12:55 Modern English
15:55 Beijing Hotline
18:54 Discovery Channel
19:30 Science and Technology
20:05 Beijing Suburb
20:35 Documentary: Museums in China (73)

BT-4
12:00 Serial: Sister Ma (34)
18:00 630 Theatre: New Happiness Street (298)

18:35 Chinese Disc Wire
19:10 Entertainment Live
19:45 28-part serial: The Parasol (21, 22)
23:18 Serial: End of the World (9, 10)

WHAT'S ON

Acrobatic Show

Chaoyang Theatre is a theatre which specializes in acrobatic performance.

Venue: Chaoyang Theatre, 36 Dongshanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing

Time: 7:15 pm, nightly Telephone: 6507-2421, 6507-1818

Kung Fu Show

The 90-minute performance displays dazzling skills of mysterious Chinese kung fu in a hero-plus-beauty story. Fifty kung fu masters amaze the audience with bare-handed practice, one-to-one competing and weapons practice.

Presented by Beijing Detian Shunyi Culture Development Co., Ltd.

Time/dates: 19:30, nightly

Venue: Xin Rong Theatre (16 Baizhifang Road, Xuanwu District)

Tel: 8354-0774, 8354-0775

20% discount on one ticket with this ad

China National Acrobatic Circus

China National Acrobatic Circus was the first State-level acrobatic troupe of New China and has won lots of gold medals in various well-known international acrobatic contests in places such as Monaco, France, Hungary, Russia and Italy. Now the star-studded cast are exhibiting the charm and elegance of the most professional comprehensive acrobatic art every night. Integrating superlative juggling, unicycling, balancing and jumping through hoops with the finest ancient Chinese dancing, the award-winning variety show will amaze you at every turn.

Time/dates: 19:15 - 20:30, every evening

Location: Universe Theatre, 10 Dongzhimen Nandajie, Dongcheng District (100 metres north of Poly Plaza)

Tel: 6502-3984, 6502-2649, 6416-9893 Fax: 6500-2743

STAGE

Experimental drama: The graduate students of the Direction Department of the Central Academy of Drama will stage an experimental production "Sifen Zhijou (After Resuming to Secular Life)" under the direction of their professors at the Yifu Experimental Theatre in the Academy from January 1 to 10.

Set in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the play tells the story of a young monk and a young nun who fall in love and secretly leave the temple rather than endure the ascetic life there.

Time: 7:15 pm, January 1-10

Place: 39, Dongmianhua Hutong, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6401-7894, 6407-406

CONCERTS

Pop nostalgia: Taiwan pop songwriter/singer Lo Tayu will stage a concert at the Capital Stadium in Beijing. Very few songwriters have influenced a generation as Lo has done in China. Lo, 48, has long been considered a pop music heavyweight. His songs appeal to those born in the 1960s-70s and who grew up listening to Lo's songs.

Time: 7:30 pm, December 31

Place: Capital Stadium, Baishijiaolu, Haidian District

Tel: 6554-6666, 6551-8888

Ballet symphony: The Symphony Orchestra of the National Ballet of China will celebrate the coming of the new year with a special concert. Liu Ju will conduct, while the first violin will be played by Li Xun. They will feature Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," Beethoven's "Overture to Edmont," Strauss' "Emperor's Waltz" and "The Blue Danube" and Chinese pieces including Chen Gang and He Zhanhao's violin concerto "The Butterfly Lovers" and excerpts from

EXHIBITION

Remembering hutong: The solo exhibition of Kuang Han's pencil sketches of Beijing's hutong is being held at the Wanfung Art Gallery in downtown Beijing.

Time: 9 am-4 pm until December 31

Place: 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6523-3320

CROSSWORD (No 6780)

- ACROSS**
- 1 Dripping
 - 4 Quiz
 - 8 Hobble
 - 12 Actress—
 - 13 First-aid plant
 - 14 Temple image
 - 15 Snag
 - 16 Not according to Hoyle
 - 18 Skulk about
 - 20 Be an accomplice
 - 21 Feminine
 - 23 The works
 - 24 Campus square
 - 27 Haul
 - 29 Essay byline
 - 33 Audi rival
 - 34 Senora—
 - 35 Peron
 - 35 Harvest Moon
 - 36 Exceeded the limit
 - 38 Pitcher handle
 - 39 Cease

- 40 Boston Bruin great
- 42 Fleck
- 44 Get ticked
- 46 NASA outfit (hlyph.)
- 50 Promoted author
- 54 'The Gold Bug'
- 55 Poet Wilfred—
- 56 Contributed
- 57 Pay for
- 58 As well as
- 59 Slow-moving beasts
- 60 Abolitionist—Turner

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

- DOWN**
- 1 'Star Trek's—speed
 - 2 Arab ruler
 - 3 Hunt-and-peck error
 - 4 Comet features
 - 5 House wing
 - 6 Sun, in
 - 7 Mazatlan
 - 8 Pigskin prop
 - 8 Responsible
 - 9 Like some
 - 10 Dropfeathers
 - 11 Tissue layer
 - 17 Slangy lady
 - 19 Unite
 - 22 Longhorn
 - 23 Grant
 - 24 TD passers
 - 25 Ballpark official
 - 26 Impress greatly
 - 28 Eggs, to Ovid
 - 30 Pollster—kin
 - 31 Here, to Henri
 - 32 L.L.D. holder
 - 37 Musician
 - 39 Milk a.mts.
 - 41 Give it the gas
 - 43 Utah city
 - 44 Turkey
 - 45 Comanches'
 - 47 Very soon after
 - 48 US Midwest state
 - 49 Camper's need
 - 50 Extinct bird
 - 51 Earlier
 - 52 Kind of shelter
 - 53 First lady?

Solution to No 6779

PAT	MTNS	DAM
OLAF	IDEA	ERA
WALLET	TRACER	
KEATS	ICE	
FEED	SKI	EIRE
LARGE	YOW	TIE
OS	EOS	COT
REM	NED	KHAKI
ADAM	ANA	WISE
KID	ATLAS	
FUELED	BERLIN	
EMU	FAVA	TERI
ZAP	THAT	SAX

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alder)

In most deals, one side or the other can make at least a game. However, in a few deals, both sides can make a game. Then there is the potential for a double game-winning team event — as in this example from a tournament in Australia.

At the first table the bidding was traditional. North's two-spade cue-bid announced at least a high-card point. West's four-spade raise was brave — but it is fun to bid with a Yarborough. After North raised to five clubs, East passed, thinking he might have sufficient defense to defeat that contract. However, he was wrong. After a spade lead, South lost only the heart trick and scored plus 620.

At the other table East opened two spades, showing some eight winners with a strong suit but limited high-card values. South made a takeout double. And West jumped to four spades. This gave North a three-spirin headache. He might have bid five clubs, but he thought he saw a guaranteed plus score, so doubled. Maybe South, with a spade void, shouldn't have passed. If the vulnerable opponents were to be believed, North couldn't have powerful spades; he

rated to have his high-card values elsewhere. So, South could have continued with either four no-trump, general takeout, or five clubs. But he passed. And note that four spades could not be beaten! East ruffed a club to get into the dummy, then twice finessed in spades through North. East won seven spades, two hearts and one club ruff for plus 790.

If there is a danger of a double game-winning, it is usually right to bid — try to buy the contract.

North			
▲	K 8 3		
▲	Q 10 9		
▲	A K		
▲	K 9 7 5 2		
West			
▲	10 9 7		
▲	8 4 3 2		
▲	9 8 4 3 2		
▲	8		
East			
▲	A Q J 6 5 4 2		
▲	A K		
▲	10 7		
▲	6 3		
South			
▲	J 7 6 5		
▲	Q J 6 5		
▲	A Q J 10 4		
Dealer: East			
Vulnerable: Both			
Opening lead: ♠ 10			
South			
DBL	4	2	1
4	4	5	1
All pass			