Awardee (Dept): Dr Cheung Ka Lok Adam, Assistant Professor (SSC)
Publication Title: Temporal-spatial patterns of one-person households in China, 1982-2005

A. Briefly introduce your research publication/study for which you have received the prize.

The research paper “Temporal-spatial patterns of one-person households in China, 1982-2005” is part of a larger project that I collaborated with other overseas demographers, to investigate the issues of living alone in Asia. Although it has been widely documented that there has been a sharp rise of the number of lone dwellers in China, no previous research has provided a detailed demographic profile of those who live alone in China and detailed sub-national level trends, and examined the contributing factors of the sharp rise of solo-dwellers. My paper fills the research gap by examining the sub-national trends and spatial patterns of living alone arrangement in the Mainland China since 1980s. My analysis of census micro-data shows that the rise of individualism may not be as important in China as in the West in explaining the rise of living alone arrangement. Other than economic restructuring and ageing which both also contributed to the rise of living alone, there is an important additional factor to explain the rise of living alone in China: the regional economic inequality that has led to the rapid rise of internal migration. A high proportion of young solo-living persons in China are rural-to-urban migrant workers from lower social class, in contrast to the western contexts where most young lone dwellers are professional urbanites. This is the first study pointing out the importance of the regional inequality and the floating population in contributing to the rise of one-person households. I conclude in this paper that the rise of one-person households will keep rising as the population is rapidly ageing, regional economic inequality is widening and rural-to-urban migration keeps increasing.

This study has been published in the journal Demographic Research, together with other papers on living alone in Asia as a special issue which I co-edited. Since published, this study has already been cited both within academic community and international media.
B. How you used/will use your prize and perhaps its usefulness to your research development?

With the prize received, I will continue working on this topic with conducting more in-depth statistical analysis of census and other survey data. The prize will sponsor me to hire a research assistant. It will enable me to speed up my progress in preparing another manuscript for submission and to expand the scope of research into other Asian societies in the coming academic year.

C. Expected research outcomes/outputs/impacts arising from this prize.

I am writing another manuscript using the data from this study. I expect to have another journal article published in international demography journal in the coming academic year. Also, since the study has been published last year, my co-author and I were interviewed by international media several times concerning about the phenomenon of living alone in Asia. As part of my commitment to knowledge transfer and public engagement, I expect to have more interviews to come in the coming year and will deliver guest lecture on this topic.