

iCare

By Victor Tse

Victor Tse is a final year accountancy student. Last summer he was a volunteer at the Cape Flats Sports Academy, a startup social enterprise which helps teenagers and children living in townships in Cape Town.

In this affluent, cosmopolitan city, Hongkongers are enjoying a high standard of living. The younger generation is amongst the most fortunate in the world. It is not unusual to see youngsters scrolling the screens of their extravagant gadgets during a silent family dinner in the restaurant. Of course, we are entitled to such luxuries. But, a majority of Hong Kong children still claim that they are living an unhappy life. Why is this happening? How come they are still not happy when they have the latest iPhone?

This summer I was very lucky to be a participant of the SHAWCO programme, working alongside entrepreneurs in social enterprises in Cape Town, South Africa. I worked at the Cape Flats Sports Academy, a startup social enterprise which helps teenagers and children living in townships – a.k.a. the poor areas in the community – develop their talents in sports. Since there are a lot of gangsters in their community, the organisation also plays an active role in providing teenagers with a shelter from the storm.

She played like Lionel Messi

I met a little girl there. She was playing football when I visited the upcoming “Open Street” event venue. She was by no means living a wealthy life like most Hong Kong kids. Wearing her very old and ripped clothing, she was never an eye-catching kid on the field. But the 8-year-old girl, who did not even wear shoes, ran like a flash and played like Lionel Messi on the football pitch. Her performance was absolutely fascinating! I was totally astonished at her talent so I asked for an interview with her during the break.



No matter how hard I tried, she just gave me the cold shoulder. I wondered if I had offended her in some unimaginable way, since it was my first time to visit South Africa. I turned to the coach and asked for the reason, and his response was utterly unexpected. The little girl was born deaf and mute because of her mother's excessive drug intake during pregnancy. Later an interview was arranged, and I got to know more about her story.

Her brother was brutally shot by gangsters

Living in an area full of poverty and crime, her brother was brutally shot by the township gangsters. Her mother sent her to the academy to get trained and stay safe. The coach also told me that the little girl was one of his best students, and she was about to get a full scholarship to be trained abroad. She did not have money, but she did have a lot of best buddies. She did not have a wealthy family, but she did have a lovely family. Poverty and disabilities had never been obstacles

standing in her way. That smile on her face when she was playing football showed me that wealth is not equivalent to happiness. Her laughter when she scored a goal told me that there are things in the world that money cannot buy.

Happiness in Hong Kong

The comfort from the material, excitement from consumption, and relaxation from a high standard of living allows us Hong Kong people, to immerse in delight and contentment. However, this is just something temporary. Recall, did you ever feel happy because of owning an expensive product? Was money the only thing that gave you the taste of pleasure? The answer is a very simple, “no”.

That handicapped girl cherishes her life and what she possesses. Without any iPhone and iPad, she understands why she needs to treasure everything and how arduous her parents' work is. She knows that her mother loves her more than anything. Her story teaches me that wealth does not determine whether children are happy or not, but family life does.

Happiness does not lie in material comfort, but spiritual welfare. What we need is love, care, inspiration, and a complete and satisfying family life. Why don't we just put away our iPad and iPhone for an hour and spend it with our family?

What we need is not the newest iPhone, but just simply “iCare” and “iLoveYou”.

