

Think global, **act local**

We're all fully aware that poverty is a major issue globally, but it is also prevalent in our own city, too, writes *Gillian Johnston*.

Oxfam Hong Kong (OHK) began back in 1976 when a group of volunteers banded together to open a second-hand shop and raise funds for anti-poverty projects around the world. Over the past 40 years, Oxfam has worked with partners and local communities in more than 90 countries to improve livelihoods, provide relief support, and advocate both for a fairer society and for the rights of the vulnerable. In Hong Kong, the charity raises awareness about issues including local poverty, food justice and globalisation, and encourages citizens to come together to make a difference. Global citizenship education is a key focus for OHK and its Interactive Education Centre was set up in 2005 specifically for this purpose. The Centre offers a range of engaging workshops for students of all ages, and addresses various topics related to poverty, like climate change, food waste and urban livelihoods.

Digging deeper

The Centre runs workshops that employ several learning methods and activities, such as role-playing and simulations that help participants delve deeper into topics, beyond learning the basics. The 'What's for Dinner?' workshop aims to help participants understand local poverty issues through direct experience. With limited money, they're sent to the market to buy food for three nutritious meals to better understand the challenges people face.

OHK has also rolled out a new, exciting parent-child activity in collaboration with The Little Green Feet, a parent-child reading group. This thought-provoking workshop encourages five- to nine-year-olds, together with their parents,



to consider homelessness and poverty in our affluent city through picture books, role-playing and other creative experiences.

OHK's education manager, Stanley So, the parent of a pre-schooler himself, says: "My son loved the workshop. He learnt more about the situation of the homeless and is more empathetic. Also, he's more aware that poverty isn't necessarily one's fault – oftentimes, there are other reasons behind it. And that's exactly what we hope to achieve □ to help children develop a deeper sense of empathy and learn more about poverty."

Oxfam kids

In addition to learning about these issues, children aged 12 and under can help tackle poverty by becoming an 'Oxfam Kid' donor. Oxfam Kids periodically receive progress updates about the charity, get opportunities to join parent-child workshops and volunteer.

Jerry Lai, who's been an Oxfam Kid since 2012, reflects on his experience:



"I had barely learnt how to walk when I began volunteering with my parents [at the Oxfam Rice Event], but they really wanted to instil in me the importance of helping others from a young age. Nowadays, I'm confident enough to do volunteer work on my own... I hope that what little I can do will be able to help people in need."

Of course, volunteering isn't the only way we can bring about change – globally and locally. The Oxfam Walkathon (an annual family-friendly walk) and the Oxfam Musical Marathon (a two-day event for people of all ages to showcase their talents for a good cause) are great opportunities to help end poverty. For more information visit

www.oxfam.org.hk/en/getinvolved.aspx 