

When we talk about Sham Shui Po, many people will jump to the negative stereotypes - grimy back alleys and unkempt street sleepers. As one of Hong Kong's poorest districts in Hong Kong, this perception is not entirely fictional. Yet, at the same time, this is hardly the whole picture.



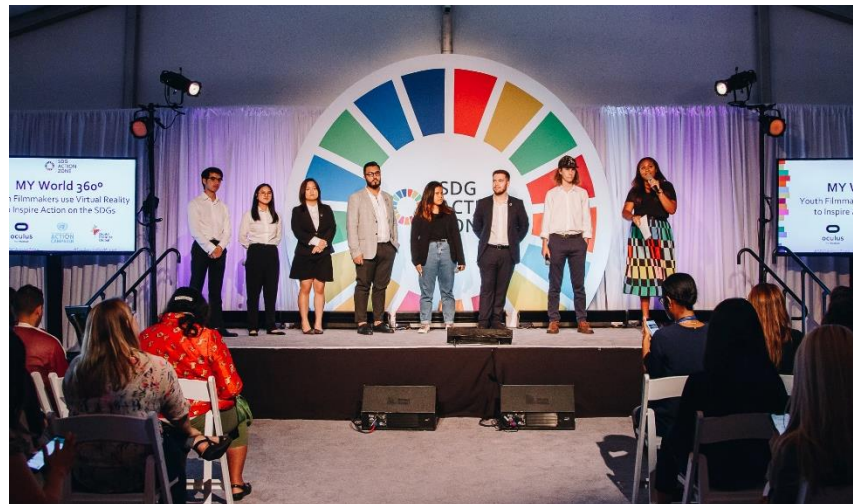
The team behind 'Diversity in Sham Shui Po'

Our team created a 360° video, 'Diversity in Sham Shui Po', documenting the lives of the people residing in the Sham Shui Po. Under the theme 'reduced inequalities', it was selected to be screened in the MY World 360° exhibit during the United Nations General Assembly session at its New York Headquarters.

With the use of 360° camera, we wish to provide audiences an immersive experience on Sham Shui Po and let them discover various aspects of the district, its fabric market, subdivided housing and ethnic minorities. I was the interviewer and was very fortunate to have the chance to personally talk to the people about their stories, struggles, hope and dreams for the future. Despite the gloomy perception of the district perpetuated by many, optimism and liveliness are strong among its residents. Although they may be struggling to make ends meet, they are just as human as all of us. At the end of the day, we are all humans. We are all equal.

This is the message we highlighted when we were presenting on stage with other filmmakers. In the film we shared a very different side to Hong Kong's prosperous image. Even so, we wanted to emphasize that the world is not of a dichotomy. It is not about the rich versus the poor. We are all humans at the end of the day, trying to make the most out of our lives. We should be working together to make the world a better place.

People who attend the United Nations General Assembly session are leaders and experts all around the globe, so of course it was a great honour to present our video on stage in front of the attendees of the General Assembly session. This will forever be one of my most cherished memories.



We were presenting on stage in the SDG Action Zone.

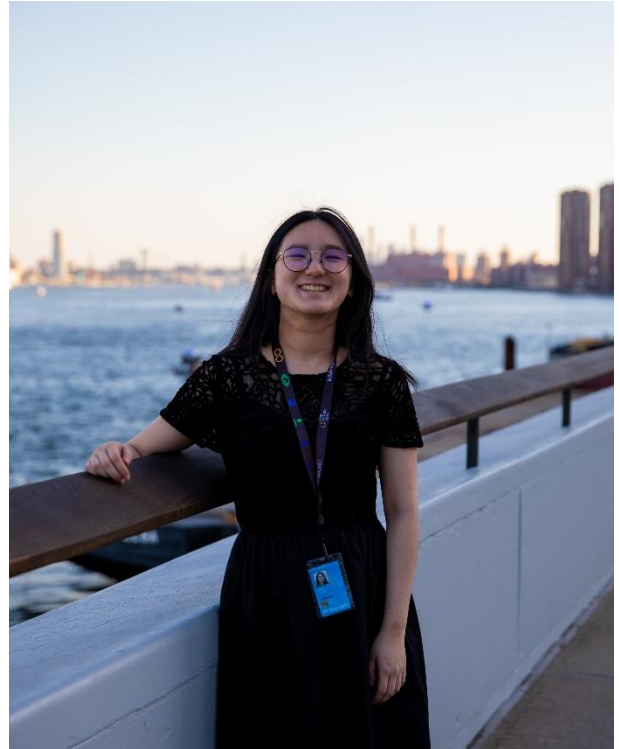
However, if I had to pick the most fruitful experience, it would have to be the conversations made off the stage, when we were hosting the exhibit booth showcasing the MY World 360° playlist. This was the time when I was able to interact with other young digital creators and converse with attendees of the exhibit. I learned a lot from other 360° filmmakers. Factually, through their videos, they introduced me to the issue of inequality in their respective countries and how their community has come together to promote equality. The exhibit features a wide collection of 360° films from all over the world. For instance, one film depicted how sustainable tourism developed in the Amazon Forest in Brazil. After watching their film, we discussed their motivation and ideas behind their work. It was an incredibly valuable learning experience to chat with these talented and aspired youths.

In a broader sense, I have learned the power of visual representation. We have all heard of problems such as global warming and wealth gap in the world, but it is a completely different experience to actually witness the problem yourself with the aid of virtual reality (VR) headsets. You can turn around and see the concrete results of these rising problems in the 360° films. It is easy to feel indifferent towards factual data as they do not translate into anything that we can relate to in our lives. Scientists will warn the public about the climate change, predicting that Arctic ice sheets will melt at a certain unprecedented rate, or that the annual temperature is expected to rise again by a few degrees. These statistics, while extremely informational to the informed few, can be too complicated for the common man.

This is when VR experience can step be and transform people's perception of the same problem. If we can experience how people in Maldives are literally living meters away from the coastline, then the problem of rising sea levels caused by climate change suddenly

becomes a much more urgent problem. By visually showing how people are personally affected, we can elicit an emotional response from the audience. We can sensitize people who are not directly affected to the ongoing problems. 360° films can provide an immersive experience for the audience, making it an ideal persuading tool to raise awareness. Simply put, the application of VR experience is limitless.

Looking back, the screening event lasted only for two days, but it has been a learning experience of a lifetime.



It is still surreal to think that I was in the UN, presenting my work.