

Family Council

“Strengthening Family Cohesion and Solidarity” Family Education Videos – Humanitarian Aid Work amidst Gunfire TONG Wing-sze, Jennifer

Joining the Médecins Sans Frontières

Jennifer : I love travelling around the world
TONG to learn about different cultures
and ethnicities
What job can I get to match my interests to career?
Joining the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) fits the bill
I can leverage my skills
and travel to different countries
learning about their cultures
while treating their patients

Unforgettable mission experience

Jennifer : My first mission was the most unforgettable one
TONG When I was in Afghanistan in 2015
a child stepped on a landmine
and his legs had to be amputated
The blood bank in Afghanistan was nothing like what we have in Hong Kong
sophisticated and with sufficient blood supply
On that occasion, we had to perform a blood transfusion
and had the whole village come in for cross-matching
to find the suitable blood donor for the child
so that we could complete the surgery with success
When a villager got hurt
the entire village would work together to help

Maintaining a long-distance family relationship

Jennifer : I’m a surgeon for the MSF
TONG Generally speaking, a mission lasts anywhere from 4 weeks and up
I personally choose missions that could last longer
from around 8 weeks to 3 months
For me, it takes time to get to know a new place
If I leave too soon

I'll find it less than ideal
During those 3 months
communication with my family
relied on the internet
If the internet connection wasn't all that good
voice calls would have to do
I remember that on my first visit to Afghanistan in 2015
I stayed there for 8 weeks
Not one night had Mum gone to bed
without waiting for my call which she would receive in the morning
and she dared not sleep until then
When I got back, I noticed she had lost a lot of weight
As I went on increasingly more missions
Mum realised and understood that I was shrewd
so her worries dwindled
Also
I try to squeeze in a holiday for a week or two between projects
and meet my family at a midpoint to go on a trip together
Say, in 2018, I completed my mission in Haiti
Since Haiti was a country in Central America
I flew to the USA
to meet up with my family
and went on a brief family trip with them
Then I headed off to Brussels and Iraq
to take up my next mission

Family support is the key to chasing dreams

Jennifer TONG : My family has given me a lot of support
First and foremost is financial support
When I was a full-time MSF doctor
I didn't have to help finance family expenses
Mum even gave me a living allowance
Therefore, without any financial burden at that time
I did the work I loved
Then there's moral support
My family saw me leave Hong Kong for project after project
but they didn't press me to say when I'll be willing to settle down

and be a bird on its legs
Also, on a few occasions
when the mission was coming to an end
Mum encouraged me to carry on
This was the kind of immense moral and financial support from my family
that allowed me to carry on with my missions

Serving Hong Kong on the anti-epidemic frontline

Jennifer : In 2003
TONG I was still a medical student during the SARS pandemic
and not a fully-fledged practising doctor
By 2020
I already made it
I believed I should do my part and give back to society
I regarded Hong Kong as a small mission site
for serving Hong Kong patients
But my family was rather worried
and wondered if I would be stricken by the pandemic
as a result of going to the frontline
Everything turned out fine
and I've never been infected
So this time when the 5th wave hit in 2022
I volunteered to go to Penny's Bay
to serve the infected for 3 months
This time around
since my parents knew that I gained the experience previously
they were quite at ease with me staying on the frontline

Spending time with family becomes paramount after witnessing life and death

Jennifer : Fact is, having been with the MSF for 2 years
TONG I witnessed a lot of life and death
There were families separated by war
and even living in two different countries for long periods of time
When I was away from Hong Kong for over 2 years
to be a full-time MSF doctor
I felt I owed my family quite a bit

because I didn't spend much time with them
Upon returning to Hong Kong
I noticed they had aged somewhat
so I save more time for them
In the past, I hoped to move out and live by myself
But now
I think sticking with my family is the most important
That's why I continue to stay here and live with my family